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HISTORY

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*The daily realities of
16th-century England*

PLUS

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under Henry VIII

● **Islam and the Tudors:**
an unlikely alliance

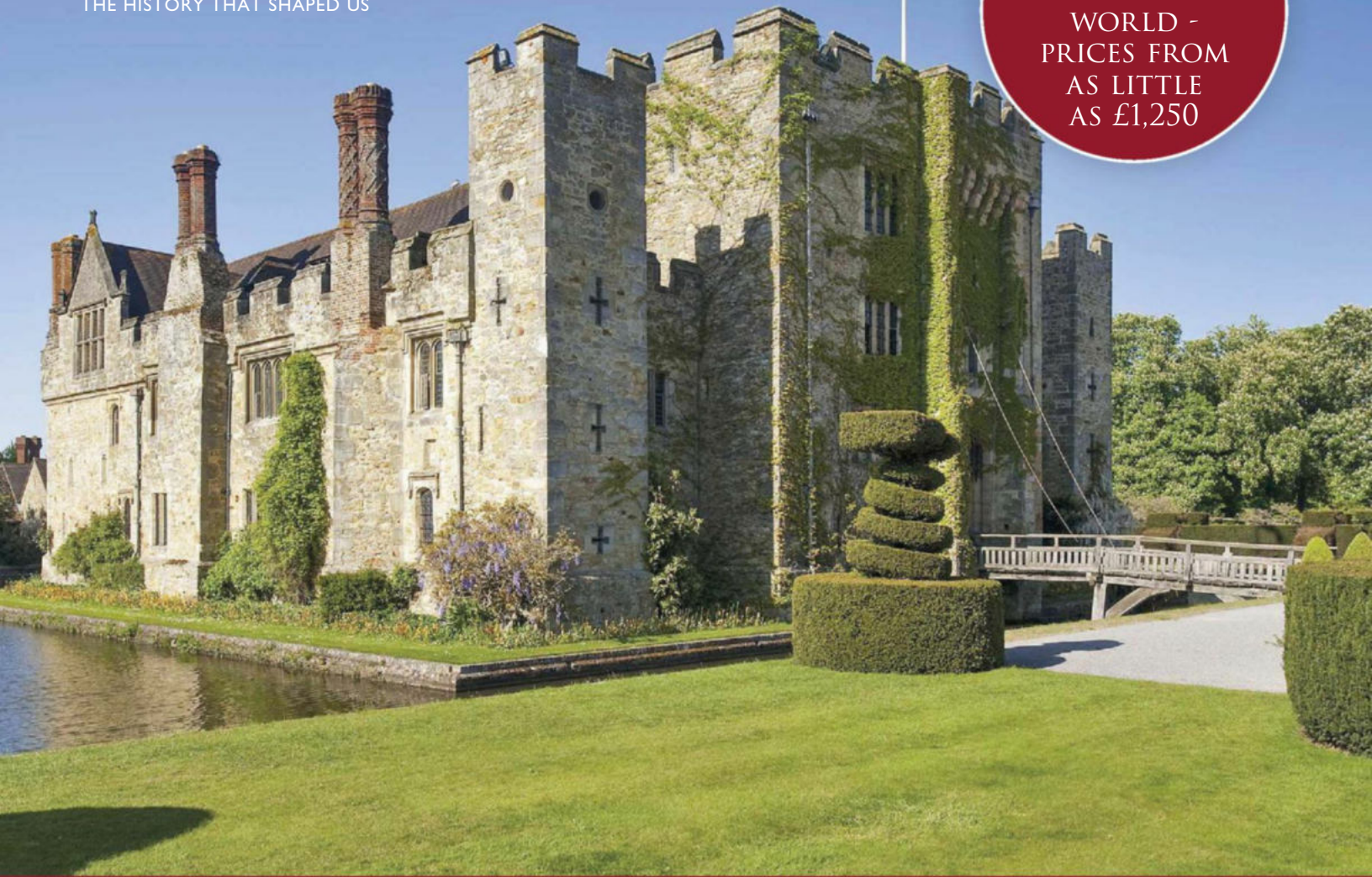
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MARCH 2016

WELCOME

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“We’re often told that the **Elizabethan era** was a golden age, filled with swashbuckling explorers and inspired playwrights parading their talents in front of the glorious Virgin Queen. But what was life like for the ordinary people? In this month’s lead feature, on page 32, James Sharpe presents a very different view of the late 16th century, as a time of hunger, crime and unrest. Nor were the wealthy immune from the trials of this period. The portrait on the cover is thought to show John Dunch, a child of a Berkshire gentry couple, together with his nursemaid. It seems John died not long after this picture was painted, at just three years of age.

Our focus on social history continues in the other articles that make up our **Tudor special**. On page 45 Lauren Johnson explores the complex and often bizarre restrictions placed on **sexual relations** at the dawn of Henry VIII’s reign. Meanwhile, on page 38 Jerry Brotton highlights the surprising links forged between Elizabethan England and the **Islamic world**.

Moving away from the 16th century, there’s plenty more for you to get your teeth into this month. Inside, you’ll find articles on the **Easter Rising**, ‘**Capability**’ **Brown** and the **mid-Victorian heyday**, among other things. One piece you can certainly get your teeth into is our survey of the **best meals from the past**, which appears on page 60. Featuring everything from 19th-century rat pie, to a Roman dish made from calf’s brains, there’s bound to be something to whet your historical appetite.

Rob Attar

Editor

BSME Editor of the Year 2015, Special Interest Brand



THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS



Lauren Johnson

Tudor sexuality is a compelling mass of contradictions, in which real behaviour rarely lived up to the fiercely stringent medical and religious rules of the time. These sexual mores remind us that 500 years ago, people were still only human!

● **Lauren writes about Tudor sex on page 45**



Ben Wilson

It was almost as if a fast-forward button had been pressed in the 1850s. It was a tumultuous, sometimes dangerous time, but one full of an energy that’s very different from how people often see the Victorian period.

● **Ben discusses the 1850s on page 65**



Heather Jones

The Easter Rising is the stuff of myth in Dublin but the recent release of new archives has transformed how historians view it. I have been working on some of the controversies surrounding how the rising fits into Britain and Ireland’s First World War experience.

● **Heather explores the Easter Rising on page 22**

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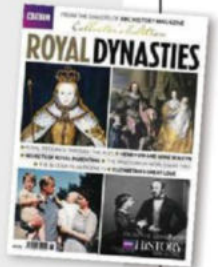
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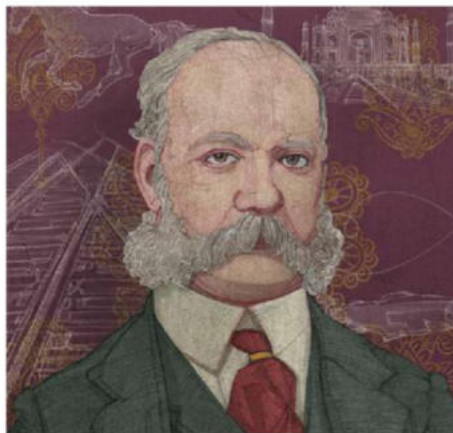
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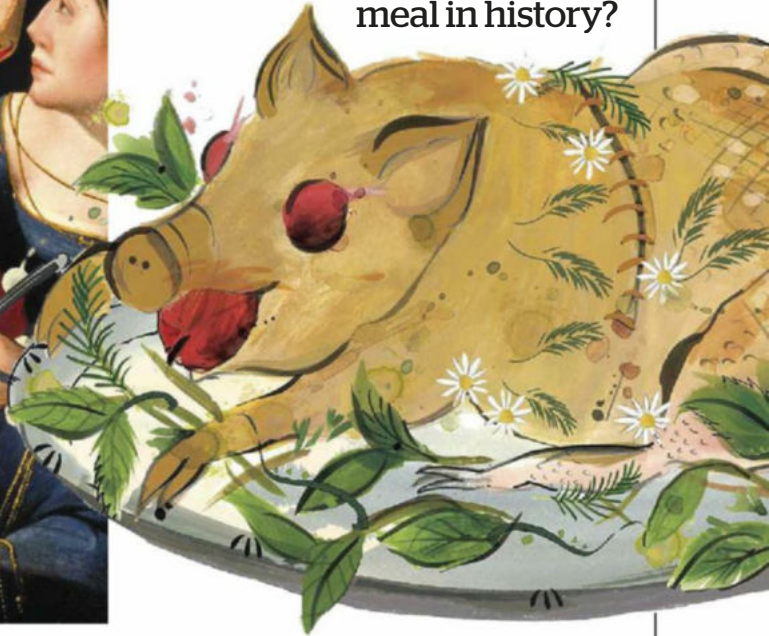
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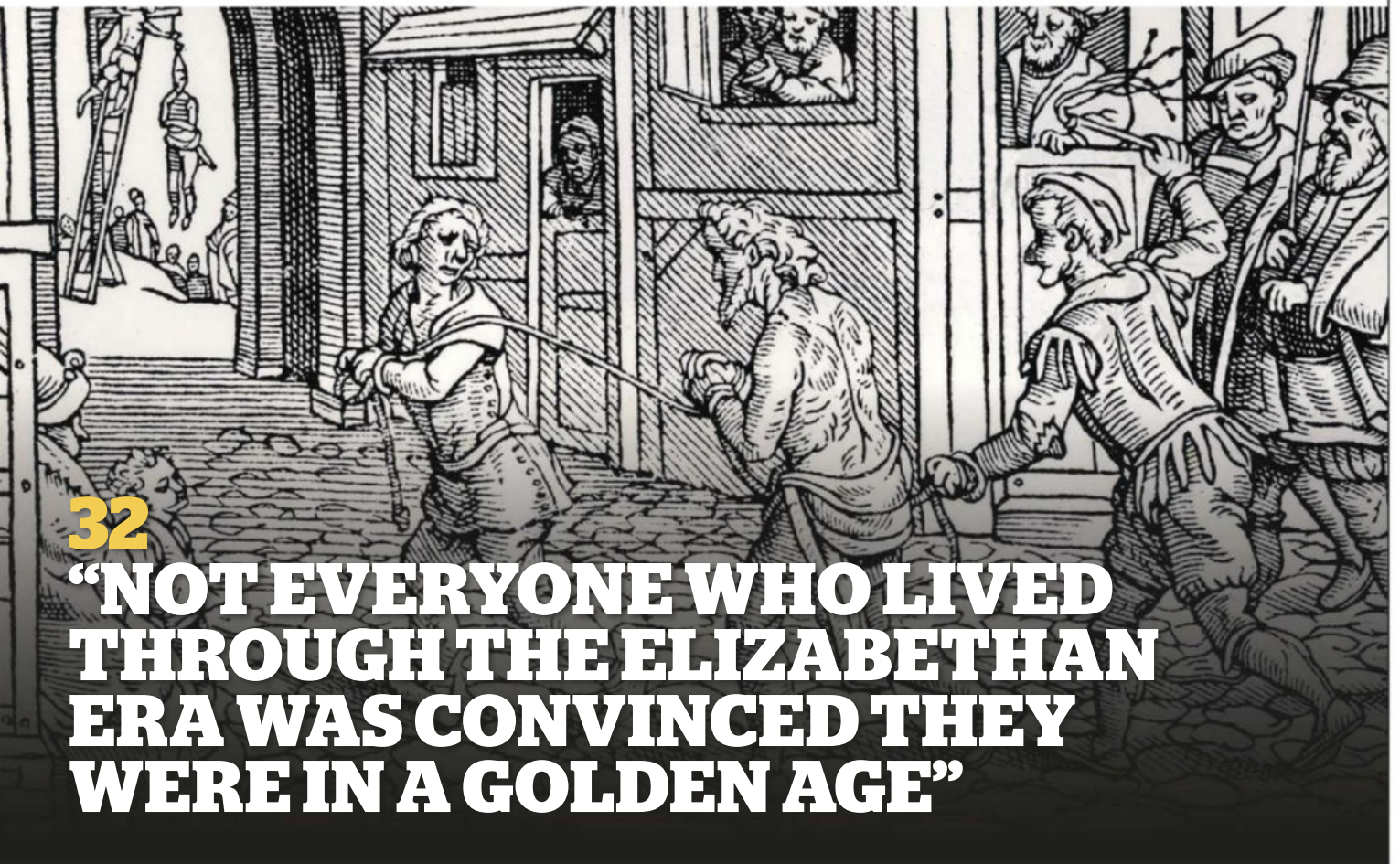
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Is a pig sewn to the rear of a cockerel the best meal in history?



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“NOT EVERYONE WHO LIVED THROUGH THE ELIZABETHAN ERA WAS CONVINCED THEY WERE IN A GOLDEN AGE”



Dominic Sandbrook highlights events that took place in **March** in history

ANNIVERSARIES

20 March 1966

A thief steals into church and pinches the World Cup

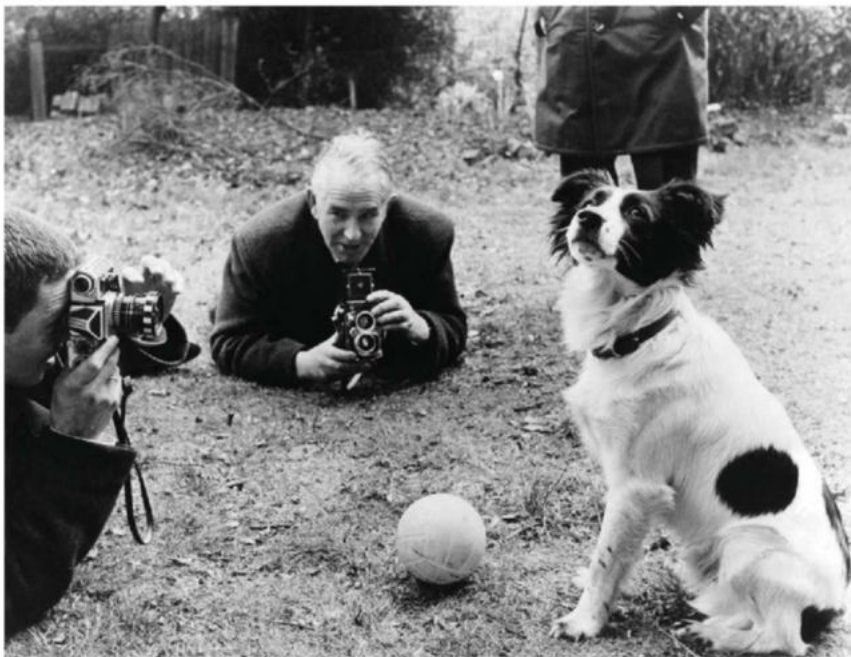
The Jules Rimet trophy vanishes from a Methodist hall just weeks before England hosts football's greatest tournament

An ordinary Sunday morning, March 1966. Through the doors of Westminster's Methodist Central Hall came hundreds of worshippers, looking forward to an hour's prayer and hymn singing. In a side room, a little gold statue glittered in the morning light: the Jules Rimet trophy, better known as the World Cup. With England due to host the tournament that summer, the cup had been put on show only two days earlier, together with an exhibition of rare stamps. But as the Methodists were filing out after the service, somebody noticed that the World Cup was gone.

"Nothing went wrong," Cecil Richardson, the chairman of the exhibition, insisted afterwards. "It was just stolen." But how, when the building was full of worshippers and security guards? It must

have happened during "an aversion of human eyes", Mr Richardson said opaquely. The police, however, immediately identified a suspect: a man seen lurking in the hall beforehand, "of slim build and sallow complexion, with dark, possibly black hair, greased, wearing a dark suit". Some witnesses even claimed he had a scar, though that may have been wishful thinking.

For the next few days, Britain was agog. As the secretary of the Football Association admitted, the theft had cast "quite a cloud" over the forthcoming tournament. But then, on 27 March, the cup was found. Out walking with his owner in South Norwood, a dog called Pickles disappeared beneath a hedge, and reappeared with something wrapped in newspaper – the Jules Rimet trophy.



Pickles the dog poses for the cameras after sniffing out the Jules Rimet trophy beneath a South Norwood hedge, March 1966

28 March 1942

Lübeck reaps 'Bomber' Harris's whirlwind

Hundreds die in the RAF's first mass bombing raid over Germany

Late on Saturday 28 March 1942, some 234 RAF bombers headed east into Nazi-occupied Europe. There was a full moon, and as the British bombers approached the Baltic coast, the medieval Hanseatic port of Lübeck was spread out beneath them. This was their target, selected by RAF Bomber Command's indomitable commander, Arthur Harris. "The Nazis entered this war under the rather childish delusion that they were going to bomb everyone else, and nobody was going to bomb them," Harris remarked. "They sowed the wind, and now they are going to reap the whirlwind."

Harris had picked Lübeck, a medium-sized industrial city, as the perfect target for his new strategy of area bombing, pounding huge tracts of German infrastructure. The result was carnage. The first wave of bombs smashed the city's buildings open; the next wave turned it into a vast bonfire. Thousands of buildings were destroyed, hundreds of people were killed, and 15,000 people were left homeless. "At least half of the town was destroyed, mainly by fire," wrote Harris.

In Germany, the Nazi leadership conceded that the attack had taken a heavy toll on the nation's morale. "This Sunday is thoroughly spoiled by an exceptionally heavy air raid by the RAF on Lübeck," wrote Hitler's propaganda chief, Joseph Goebbels, in his diary. "No German city has ever been attacked so severely from the air... The damage is really enormous, I have been shown a newsreel of the destruction. It is horrible. One can well imagine how such a bombardment affects the population."

CORBIS

Dominic Sandbrook is a historian and presenter. His latest series, *Let Us Entertain You*, recently aired on BBC Two



BUNDESARCHIV

Lübeck Cathedral burns in the wake of a massive RAF attack on the German city in March 1942. "One can well imagine how such a bombardment affects the population," said Joseph Goebbels after seeing newsreel of the destruction



1 March 1565

In Guanabara Bay, Brazil, Portuguese explorers found the city of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro, named after their king's patron saint, but now known simply as Rio de Janeiro.



24 March 1976

Juan Perón's widow, Isabel (left), is deposed by the Argentine army after a presidency lasting less than two years and replaced by a military junta.

25 March 717

After his son is captured by rebels led by the future Leo III, the Byzantine emperor Theodosius III agrees to resign the throne and enter the clergy.



Emperor Constantine, shown making a donation from the city of Rome to Pope Sylvester I in a 13th-century fresco. His decision to set Sunday aside for worship was motivated by religious principle and economic pragmatism

7 March 321

Constantine orders that Sunday become a day of rest

The Roman emperor shapes working practices for millennia with a decree that pleases Christians and pagans alike

Like all successful politicians, the Roman emperor Constantine was a master of ambiguity. Remembered today as the first Christian emperor, he was also associated with the cult of Sol Invictus – the unconquered sun – and even displayed images of the sun god on his coins.

When, on 7 March 321, Constantine issued an edict declaring that Sunday must be the day of rest, he was once again treading a fine line between

Christianity and paganism, and between religious principle and economic pragmatism. “On the venerable day of the Sun,” he ordered, “let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country however persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits because it often happens that another day is not suitable for grain-sowing or vine planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such

operations the bounty of heaven should be lost.”

Picking Sunday as the day of rest made excellent political sense. Although it was nominally a working day, many Christians across the empire already treated Sunday as a day for religious worship, although those in Rome and Alexandria tended to prefer Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. More importantly, though, most non-Christians already regarded Sunday as a special day because workers were often paid on Sundays. Perhaps crucially, this was the special day of Sol Invictus, which had become an official cult as recently as AD 274 and had a particular appeal to the senatorial upper classes.

Not all Christians warmed to Constantine's edict, and even centuries later some groups still preferred Saturday. And yet, even now, 1,695 years on, many of us still observe Constantine's edict.



African slaves kill Captain Ferrer of *La Amistad* with cane knives – and, in doing so, trigger a legal cause célèbre

9 March 1841

The US Supreme Court frees the slaves of *La Amistad*

Justice Story rules that 53 Africans who had overpowered their captors had been “unlawfully kidnapped”

When, on 9 March 1841, US Supreme Court justice Joseph Story rose to deliver the verdict in the case ‘United States v The Amistad’, the air was heavy with tension. Ever since the case had first come to court, it had divided friends and families across the nation. Indeed, perhaps no legal case in American history had more clearly exposed the United States’ deep disagreements about the issue of slavery.

Almost two years earlier, *La Amistad*

had left Havana, Cuba for the province of Puerto Principe. A Spanish ship, it was carrying 53 Africans, who had been captured in Sierra Leone and sold into slavery. After only a few days, the slaves staged a successful revolt, killing most of the crew and ordering the navigator to take them back to Africa. Instead, he sailed to New York, where the slaves were taken into federal custody. The Spanish demanded them back, and President Martin Van Buren was minded to

comply. But as the courts observed, both Britain and the US had outlawed the Atlantic slave trade. What were the Americans to do?

As Justice Story began speaking, it became clear that the Supreme Court had sided with the slaves. As their lawyer put it, they had been “unlawfully kidnapped, and forcibly and wrongfully carried on board”, so they were entitled to their freedom. Abolitionist supporters paid for them to be put up in Farmington, Connecticut, where they were given English lessons and Bible classes, while fundraisers collected money to send them back home. A year later, they set eyes on the African coast for the first time since they had been kidnapped. Most disappeared into obscurity. But one, Sarah Margru Kinson, later returned to the United States to study at Oberlin College, before going back to Sierra Leone as a Christian missionary. **III**

COMMENT / John Oldfield

“The Amistad affair set America on a course towards civil war”

“ The Amistad case of March 1841 exposed some of the deepest contradictions within 19th-century American society. On one side of the argument were ranged powerful state interests, principally made up of southern slaveholders, who dismissed the 53 African captives as savages (literally, non-persons) and urged that they should be returned to their rightful ‘owners’.

On the other side of the argument were ranged northern abolitionists, brilliantly led by John Quincy Adams, a former president of the United States, who argued that, as free persons unlawfully transported to

Cuba, the captives were entitled to the protection of American courts.

The stakes could not have been higher, which is why the verdict sent shock waves through the US political establishment. At a stroke, the Supreme Court undermined the south’s white racist assumptions, while providing those opposed to slavery with a significant moral victory. As for the captives, they became minor celebrities, feted by their northern sympathisers.

The Amistad case heightened tensions between north and south, helping to set the nation on a course towards civil war. It represented an important landmark in the

bitter and protracted struggle that would eventually lead to the end of American slavery. **”**



John Oldfield is director of the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation, University of Hull, and the author of *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution*, which is now available in paperback (CUP, 2015).

A starring role...



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Alderney's powerful tides and rocky coastline have claimed many ships over the years. The Alderney Society Museum has an extensive display of artefacts recovered from the wreck of an Elizabethan warship. Thought to be the only known wreck from this period, it has excited naval historians around the world.

Discover Alderney's history and learn how its relationship with the sea has influenced its landscape and way of life.



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The waiting game
A French waiter serves his customers in this c1860 illustration. New research shows that the 'tips' received by staff have long proved controversial

Why waiters' tips were just as hot a topic a century ago

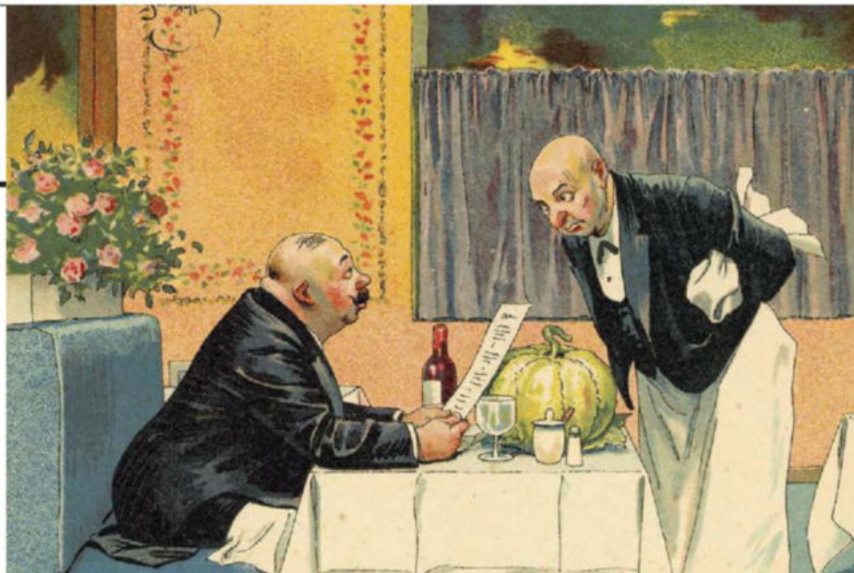
Restaurant tipping has hit the headlines in recent months – but a new study reveals that the issue dates back several decades. By **Matt Elton**

The way in which cafes and restaurants pay their staff recently provoked a storm of controversy, with several high-profile businesses coming under fire for their policies towards their workers' tips. Yet new research suggests that firms benefiting from the money earned by waiters is hardly a modern phenomenon – and that the issue was just as controversial in the years before the First World War.

The study, carried out by Patricia Van den Eeckhout from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and published in the journal *International Review of Social History*,

explores the experiences of waiters (male and female) in countries around western Europe. Her analysis suggests that, in many ways, the situation in the 19th century could be similar to that of today. In some cases, waiters were paid a small wage but were able to collect tips in order to earn more money. "For some restaurant workers, this could be a source of pride; proof that their skills enabled them to collect generous tips," says Van den Eeckhout. "But this also gave employers an opportunity to pay low wages or no wages at all."

Relations between restaurants and their employees have, it seems, rarely been



Daily bread A French image from the turn of the 20th century shows a diner and his waiter. In the early 1900s, hiring waiters went from being a cost-free operation to a source of income in its own right, a new study has found

straightforward. In some instances, workers were required to buy daily 'tokens' that they could trade back according to the number of drinks they sold. In other cases, workers would have to pay a set fee in order to carry out their job.

Van den Eeckhout's research – gleaned from sources including newspapers, pamphlets and union records – shows that, despite these issues, the prospect of earning extra money through tipping attracted workers from other industries. This resulted in increased competition for jobs – and a reduction in wages. By the 1840s many waiters in Paris were paid no fixed income at all, and were instead entirely reliant on tips. Although the situation varied across Europe – in Germany in 1893, for instance, 77 per cent of cafe waiters still received a small fixed wage – the general trend was for this to diminish. By the eve of the First World War, only one in five waiters in German cafes were paid a set fee.

All of this led to increasingly powerful restaurant and cafe employers taking things one step further: forcing their staff to pay for the privilege of receiving tips. "This meant that restaurants and

"For some workers, tips were proof of their skill – but they also gave employers an opportunity to pay low wages"

cafes actively benefited from taking on new workers," says Van den Eeckhout. In other words, hiring waiters went from being a cost-free operation for restaurants and cafes to a source of income in its own right.

The study also explores the ways in which wages and tips differed between men and women. Although details of gender ratios in the industry are hard to find, men were, it seems, more likely to be employed in high-end restaurants and hotels than women. In 1896, the social reformer Charles Booth noted that in London there was an increasing tendency to employ women in "tea and other refreshment rooms".

Contemporary sources suggest that female serving staff were given a fixed wage more often than their male counterparts because they generally collected fewer tips. But Van den Eeckhout could find no concrete evidence in her research to confirm this assertion.

Van den Eeckhout is eager to stress that, unfair as it may seem today, waiters did not necessarily always lose out as a result of the increasing reliance on tipping. Some feared that their income might even decrease if, as in some cases, a fixed wage may have replaced the ability to collect tips. "Low wages meant that workers may have been better off than employees in similar jobs who did not have the opportunity of gaining tips," she says. "The world of tipping, it seems, was just as complicated in the past as it is today."

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH...

The world's oldest tea has been uncovered...

Experts in China have found what is thought to be the oldest remains of tea, buried in pits around the tomb of the Han dynasty's fourth emperor, Liu Qi. Researchers used molecular analysis to identify the residue, which dates to between 188 and 141 BC. A comparison with tea found at a cemetery in Tibet – where it does not naturally grow – also shows that tea was being transported from China to other parts of the region centuries earlier than previously thought.

...as has Europe's first prosthetic implant

A sixth-century AD skeleton with a wooden foot may be the earliest example of a prosthetic device yet found in Europe, archaeologists in Austria believe. The remains were found with an iron ring and a clump of wood and leather in the place of the left foot and ankle. "This man appears to have got over the loss of his foot and lived for at least two more years with this implant, walking pretty well," said Sabine Ladstätter from the Austrian Archaeological Institute.

Bronze Age houses are 'best ever found' in UK

A settlement of Bronze Age dwellings uncovered in Cambridgeshire are the best-preserved examples of their kind found in the UK, according to researchers. The circular wooden houses, at Must Farm quarry, stood on stilts and are thought to date from between roughly 1,000 and 800 BC. Artefacts unearthed at the site include glass beads and pots with their original meals still inside.



These pots, and other finds, may throw new light on Bronze Age life

BIMAN

HISTORY EVENTS

The view from the crowd at India's largest literary festival

History events are booming in the UK – but how do they compare to India's huge free festival in Jaipur?

Dave Musgrove reports

History festivals seem to be cropping up all over the place: the Chalke Valley History Festival is a firmly established fixture in June, a new history festival is set to launch in July next year in Cambridge, and *BBC History Magazine* holds its own very popular weekends every autumn. All of these events are to an extent born out of the long tradition of literary festivals, which have always tended to attract historians as speakers and history enthusiasts as attendees. But that doesn't apply simply in Britain, and *BBC History Magazine* recently joined the crowds in the hot and historic Rajasthani city of Jaipur to sample the atmosphere at India's largest literary festival.

It's a calendar event for literary lovers, and gets fiercely busy, attracting delegates from across India, and further afield; US, British and Australian accents are common. It is able to attract major luminaries, both Indian and international: this year's speakers included the novelist Margaret Atwood and the comedian Stephen Fry.

Noted names from the world of history are also thick on the ground, no doubt in part because one of the festival's co-directors is the historian and travel writer William Dalrymple. This year's history speakers included Labour MP and Victorian specialist Tristram Hunt, First World War expert Margaret MacMillan and Radio 4's recent chronicler of India, Sunil Khilnani.

The talk sessions, of which there are 200 spread over the five days, tend to take the form of conversations or debates rather than



Meeting of minds Authors and historians at this year's Jaipur Festival, which ran from 21 to 25 January, included (clockwise from top left): King's College London professor Sunil Khilnani, presenter of a BBC radio series on Indian lives; novelist Margaret Atwood; journalist Swapna Dagupta and historian and Labour MP Tristram Hunt

lectures, and difficult topics are regularly broached: the partition of 1947 and the consequences of British imperialism in India were both subjected to forensic examination in front of engaged audiences. One of the most energetically debated events centred around Oxford historian Peter Frankopan's analysis of the global nature of the Silk Roads. One of his points was to dwell on the difficulties people have in grasping the global perspective of historical stories. It was interesting to see him demonstrating how both the British and Indian views of the past lead to a parochial understanding that fails to take account of the pivotal role played by

“The festival attracts major luminaries: speakers included Peter Frankopan and Margaret MacMillan”

the Middle East and central Asia in swathes of global history.

These sessions relate to work by historians familiar to British audiences. Yet speakers at Jaipur also include scholars based in India and the subcontinent who are not household names here, tackling topics – including 16th-century Indian epic poetry and the histories of the lands of Sikkim and Nepal – not regularly discussed in the UK.

This blend of familiar and unfamiliar histories, an extraordinary setting, and a phenomenal speaker line-up combine to make the Jaipur Literary Festival as thought-provoking and relevant for British history enthusiasts as anything in the UK. You can go for a long weekend, but there is much to see and enjoy in the area for those who can afford a longer break in Rajasthan.

See jaipurliteraturefestival.org for more details. Margaret MacMillan writes about the role of people in history on page 51, while Sunil Khilnani's book is reviewed on page 73

The historians' view...

Why is Europe the source of such angst to the Tories?

With a referendum on the UK's membership of the EU looming, David Cameron will be painfully aware that his party has a history of tearing itself apart over Europe. Two historians offer their personal perspectives on an issue that has troubled the Conservatives for five decades

Interviews by **Chris Bowlby**, a BBC journalist specialising in history

“There is every possibility of a serious split as many Conservatives leap at the opportunity to campaign for Britain's exit from the EU

DR ROBERT CROWCROFT

In 1972, Enoch Powell accused the Conservative party 'machine' of using "bribes and threats" to force Conservative MPs to back the Heath government's bid to take Britain into the European Economic Community. For Powell, this was crucial, due to the fundamental issues of parliamentary sovereignty, democratic accountability, law-making and economic prosperity. He warned that the legislative supremacy of parliament, accountability over taxation and expenditure, and the judicial sovereignty of Britain were about to be thrown away.

Powell charged that in seeking to enter a 'Europe' moving towards federal integration, the Tory government was committing a grave betrayal. In one of Powell's most powerful speeches, he raged that "over and

behind the executive of this country, like a shadow standing behind the minister at that [dispatch] box, will be an executive power which this house cannot get at".

Powell was in the minority at the time, but over the decades more MPs accepted his views, as subsequent events appeared to vindicate his warnings. As a result, no issue provoked such consistent rancour. 'Europe' posed acute problems for Margaret Thatcher and, even more so, John Major. Thatcher was a Eurosceptic, but her government signed the 1986 Single European Act which accelerated the evolution of the organisation towards its current form. Even the most combative of leaders proved unable to shunt developments in the direction of what Tories judged to be British interests. In the early 1990s, divisions within the party over Europe became truly unbridgeable. The issue was utterly corrosive for Major.

Almost all Conservatives were keen on European co-operation as a device to stimulate trade – though even this is now changing, with doubts about Europe's competitiveness. Yet few Conservatives felt enthusiasm for the creation of some form of 'super-state'. European co-operation was seen as a way to neutralise the age-old 'German question' by aligning the interests of that powerful country with its neighbours, but most Conservatives saw no reason why this should entail constitutional changes across the English Channel.



Because of its incendiary potential, senior Conservatives often saw the European question as a distraction they would rather ignore. But their party consistently refused to acquiesce and has been quick to cry 'betrayal'. Managing that has been taxing.

Today, there appears to be a broad party consensus that Britain's inability to control its borders is unacceptable, that parliament ought to reclaim at least some of its decision-making authority, and that British law should hold primacy over laws emanating from the continent. Developments in Europe since the 2008 financial crisis are held to have revealed the reality of the EU: brazen self-assertion by Germany and Brussels, a disregard for democratic decisions made in some member states, and long-term economic decline.

As a referendum looms, there is every possibility of a serious split as many Conservatives leap at the opportunity to campaign for an EU exit. Much depends on whether the debate lapses from civility into recrimination. If that occurs, the prime minister's authority could be destroyed. Avoiding such a fate will test Cameron's political skills to their limits.



Dr Robert Crowcroft is a lecturer in contemporary history, including British Conservatism, at the University of Edinburgh

Conservatives say YES to Europe



Margaret Thatcher, flanked by Willie Whitelaw and Peter Kirk, backs the campaign to stay in Europe ahead of the referendum in 1975

“The context is right for a considered decision on membership. One can only hope that the politicians rise to the occasion

DR MARK GARNETT

Historians can provide short-cuts to understanding today's debate by examining key episodes in the tortuous story of Britain's involvement with Europe. In particular, we can look at two speeches delivered by prime ministers.

The first speaker, in 1962, was Harold Macmillan at the Conservative conference. He told his supporters that “Europe is on the move” and that “we in Britain cannot stand aside”. What was then the EEC was developing fast, and further delay in joining would cost Britain the chance of influencing an organisation already realising its massive economic potential. There were implications for Britain's ‘sovereignty’, but the same was true of other alliances, notably Nato. Thus, in the previous year, after “long and anxious thought”, the cabinet had opened negotiations with a view to joining.

The most striking feature of Macmillan's speech is its defensive tone. Why had the cabinet given “long and anxious thought” to an application that would open such glittering opportunities? The answer lies in the context. Britons boasting of having saved Europe between 1939 and 1945 were being invited to see the same continent as a source of economic salvation. In terms of Britain's postwar narrative, this could only be seen as a defeat.

Macmillan also had to be careful on the subject of sovereignty. He knew very well that membership of Nato, the humiliating Suez episode of 1956, and British dependence on US nuclear technology demanded a new understanding of this concept. But he could hardly tell the party faithful that EEC membership would be just one more blow to a totem of national prestige.

By contrast, Margaret Thatcher's 1988 Bruges speech conveys a characteristic edge of aggression. It's easy to forget that much of the speech was positive about “willing and active co-operation” in Europe. Admittedly, Europe would only succeed on the basis of “independent sovereign states”, but this repeated a well-known British position.

Why, then, is the Bruges speech seen as a sacred text for Conservative Eurosceptics? Mrs Thatcher accused her opponents of seeking “to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the centre of a European conglomerate”, and of trying to fit



David Cameron has promised a referendum on whether Britain should remain in the EU by the end of 2017

national characteristics “into some sort of identikit European personality”. This section of the speech also seems to betray Thatcher's concern at the imminent prospect of a reunited Germany.

Apart from obvious differences in the characters of these two leaders, the sharp contrasts are due to context. In 1988, Britain was in post-Falklands euphoria, instead of the sobering memory of Suez. In 1962, Britain's relative economic prosperity seemed endangered, while in Thatcher's third term ministers boasted that the country had undergone an “economic miracle” without noticeable assistance from Europe. In 1988, in short, the time was ripe for a reassertion of ‘sovereignty’.

What can we draw from this fascinating evidence? First, it seems safe to say that the Macmillan of 1962 would not have applied to join the EU of 2016. Equally, though, Thatcher's ideas about ‘sovereignty’ – and, indeed, the fragility of national identity – don't apply to Britain's current situation. Compared to 1962 and 1988, Britain is in an age of relative equipoise, more chastened than 1988, but less pessimistic than 1962. So the context is right for a carefully-considered decision on membership. One can only hope that the politicians rise to the occasion. ■



Dr Mark Garnett is a senior lecturer at Lancaster University, chiefly concerned with UK politics, in particular the Conservative party

DISCOVER MORE

BOOKS

► **The Oxford Companion to British History** edited by John Cannon and Robert Crowcroft (OUP, 2015)

► **Exploring British Politics** by Mark Garnett & Philip Lynch (Routledge, 2016, fourth edition)

Next month: We explore the Labour party's historical relationship with Europe

PAST NOTES
SITCOMS**OLD NEWS***An awkward dilemma
for Russian travellers***Dundee Evening Telegraph /
1 July 1903**

In 1896, Moscow celebrated the opening of its new 'Kurskaya station'. The railway had connected Moscow to Kursk since 1868 but now had its own dedicated station, taking passengers out into the vast continent.

On one particular journey in 1903, it was reported that thieves had broken into the second-class sleeping saloons and stolen passengers' clothing, "even their shirts".

The train had left Kursk, a city dating from the 11th century and home to one of Russia's largest breweries, now bringing with it a number of extremely cold, and somewhat embarrassed passengers to Moscow.

The newspaper reported that it was "peculiarly awkward" for them. Before Moscow the passengers had disembarked and telegraphed tailoring establishments, as well as friends and family, to ask them to meet the train at the station with "sufficient clothing to permit them to leave".

Almost as an aside, the paper noted that "the passengers were robbed of all their valuables". The embarrassing incident was reported by British papers as a warning against foreign travel.

News story sourced from *britishnewspaper archive.co.uk* and rediscovered by

Fern Riddell. Fern regularly appears on BBC Radio 3's *Free Thinking*

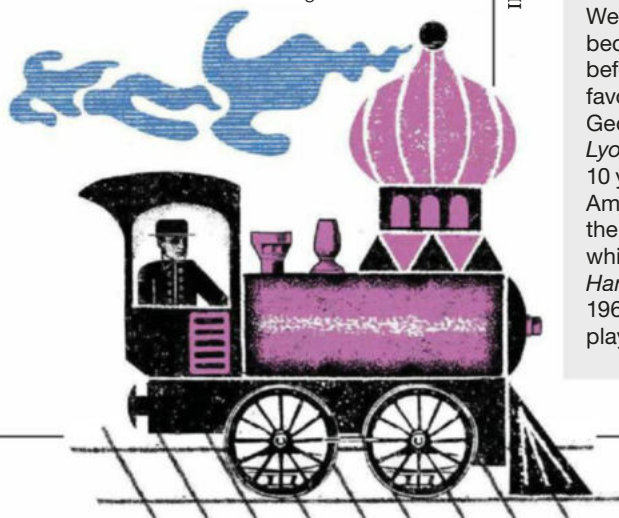


ILLUSTRATION BY BEN JONES

**The Last of the Summer Wine** clocked up an astounding 295 episodes

As *Dad's Army* makes a return on the big screen, **Julian Humphrys** looks at our love of the sitcom

Which was the first TV sitcom?

Pinwright's Progress, which ran fortnightly for 10 episodes in 1946. Broadcast live from the BBC Studios at Alexandra Palace, it featured James Hayter as Mr J Pinwright, owner of the chaotic Macgillygally's Stores. Later in his career, in addition to telling us that Mr Kipling made exceedingly good cakes, Hayter returned to the world of retail comedy as Mr Percival Tebbs in *Are You Being Served?*

The first US TV sitcom was *I Love Lucy*, starring Lucille Ball and her real-life husband Desi Arnaz, which was on air between 1951 and 1957. In four of its six seasons it was America's most watched TV show.

Which sitcoms did we watch in the 1950s?

We often began by listening to them because many first aired on the radio before transferring to TV. Two favourites were *A Life of Bliss* starring George Cole and *A Life with the Lyons* which began in 1950, ran for 10 years and featured a real-life American family in London. One of the BBC's most acclaimed sitcoms, which also began on the radio, was *Hancock's Half Hour*, which ran until 1961 and featured Tony Hancock playing an exaggerated version of

himself. Hancock's lugubrious disappointed-with-life character anticipated later creations like the original grumpy old man, Victor Meldrew, from *One Foot in the Grave*.

One of ITV's early offerings was the *Army Game*, a popular skit on National Service which ran from 1957 until 1961 with over 150 episodes. Many of its cast subsequently found success in the *Carry On* films.

Which sitcom was the most controversial?

A leading contender has to be Johnny Speight's *Till Death Us Do Part* (1965 to 1975) featuring Warren Mitchell as the bigoted and (by the standards of the day) foul-mouthed Alf Garnett. The show attracted criticism – partly because of Garnett's liberal use of the word 'bloody' and partly because not all viewers realised he was supposed to be a figure of ridicule.

What has been the world's longest-running sitcom?

Roy Clarke's *The Last of the Summer Wine*, which featured the antics of three elderly men in a Yorkshire village. It premiered in 1973 and, with a few changes of character along the way, ran for 37 years, notching up 295 episodes. ■

Gibraltar

NEANDERTHAL CAVES AND ENVIRONMENTS

A massive cave complex in Gibraltar is being put forward for UNESCO World Heritage Status by the United Kingdom. The Gibraltar Neanderthal Caves and Environments site, on the Rock of Gibraltar, is changing the way we think of Neanderthals, our closest extinct human relative.

The site encompasses a series of caves, the main ones being Gorham's and Vanguard Caves, on Gibraltar's Mediterranean shore. The area was a Neanderthal stronghold and the caves were occupied for at least 100 thousand years, starting 127 thousand years ago.

During the climatic upheavals of the Ice Ages the climate here remained benign, thanks to Gibraltar's southern position; its distance from high Iberian mountains and glaciers; and the influence of the Atlantic. In this climatic refuge Neanderthals survived as long, perhaps longer, than anywhere else on Earth. Even during the coldest moments, olives – the classic indicator of Mediterranean conditions – survived. So to did land tortoises, lizards, Mediterranean birds and many warm-weather plants.

Scientists from many countries and institutions, led by the Gibraltar Museum, have been studying the caves for 25 years and evidence that includes camp fires, stone tools and remains of butchered animals is helping piece together the lives of the Neanderthals.

Outside the caves, the habitat that supported them is now a shallow coastal shelf submerged by sea, but evidence from the caves, such as pollen and fossils, gives a clear picture of what it once looked like. It was a wooded savannah – a veritable Mediterranean Serengeti – and was inhabited by ancient elephants and rhinos, red deer, ibex, wild boar, horses and cattle. These attracted carnivores, from spotted hyenas to lions, leopards, wolves and brown bears, and the caves provided the Neanderthals with shelter and safety from them, particularly at night.

Many bird fossils, including those of golden eagles, were found in the caves and it is now known that Neanderthals caught them not just for food but also for their feathers, which suggests symbolic thinking. In 2014 scientists reported a major discovery: a rock engraving, known popularly as the Neanderthal hashtag, is the first known example of their artistic potential.

It is hardly surprising that these caves are being put forward for World Heritage Status; they are not just giving evidence of the Neanderthal way of life, they are giving clues as to the intelligence of what were once thought of as ape-like brutes. At the cutting end of research, the Gibraltar Neanderthal Caves and Environments site is changing the way we think of the Neanderthals.

LETTERS

Plague busters

LETTER
OF THE
MONTH

I read the recipe for Four Thieves Vinegar in the January edition (*Miscellany*) with interest. When I was a child in the 1950s my mother used to prepare a cough remedy in which Black Bullets or Bull's Eyes boiled sweets were dissolved in boiled malt vinegar. When cool, this mixture made a soothing cough syrup. I see that the sweets would contain many of the same ingredients as the Four Thieves Vinegar recipe: mint, menthol, horehound, cloves, cinnamon and sugar. I also made it for my own children and none of us contracted the plague! Nice to know it has stood the test of time.

Anne Stark, Peeblesshire



Four Thieves Vinegar shares ingredients with Anne Stark's cough remedy

● We reward the letter of the month writer with our 'History Choice' book of the month. This issue it is *The Holy Roman Empire* by Peter H Wilson. Read the review on page 69



She-wolves and Elvis

I was very interested in the debate in the January magazine between Ian Mortimer and Nicholas Vincent about the fate of Edward II (*Was Edward II Really Murdered?*). I am sure that Ian Mortimer is right. Alison Weir's excellent book *Isabella: She-Wolf of France, Queen of England* goes into some detail about the Fieschi letter and it seems very convincing. It was surprising that Professor Vincent's response contained so much irrelevant detail about other people, including a mention of Elvis Presley!

Juliet Chaplin, Sutton

In defence of Henry V

I must express my strong disagreement with Stephen Gadd's letter in the February issue, setting out his response to the perception of Henry V as a hero. It has always seemed unwise to assume that people in an era that was far removed from our own shared the views of modern observers.

Henry's contemporaries did not condemn him for his treatment of the Lollards – which ultimately resulted from the Lollard Rising of 1414. This was not a peaceful protest in favour of religious freedom, as some modern observers present it. Indeed, contemporary sources suggest some of those who took part in the rising were armed, and that many

more individuals were executed for rebellion than heresy.

I must also disagree with Mr Gadd's claim that Henry's invasion of France ultimately caused the Wars of the Roses. Historians of the period have demonstrated that many factors contributed to the conflict (including the deficiencies of Henry VI). The evidence strongly suggests that the Lancastrian regime was accepted by most of the political elite and the general populace until the 1450s.

Several studies of the life and reign of Henry V have also shown that he commanded the loyalty of the majority of his subjects and did not tolerate the kind of strife, factionalism and feuding that broke out in the reign of his son.

If we examine Henry V as he was viewed by contemporary and near contemporary observers, we will probably find ourselves closer to Shakespeare than Stephen Gadd.

JM Arman, Sussex

Look, duck and vanish?

Leo McKinstry is right to say that a large proportion of the men who enlisted in the Home Guard/Local Defence

The Home Guard was more professional than its reputation might suggest, says Nick Ridout

Volunteers in 1940 were under the age of 30 (*The Dad's Army Guide to Defending Britain*, February), even though most of the commanding officers were men who had been awarded their commissions in the Great War.

Nevertheless, the LDV men were initially greeted with some derision by the great British public, particularly when they paraded with pitchforks and broom handles rather than rifles. The LDV tag, it was said, did not stand for Local Defence Volunteers or even, as Leo McKinstry says, for 'Last Desperate Venture'. Rather it stood for 'Look, Duck and Vanish'!

Phil Carradice, St Athan

Battle-hardened vets

May I applaud Leo McKinstry's excellent article rehabilitating the reputation of the Home Guard. *Dad's Army* is superb and timeless comedy, but it is not history. One further aspect of the organisation is that most, if not all, of them would have been battle-hardened veterans of the First World War trenches – no strangers they to hardship, living in the field and the extremes of military operations. I suspect that the view of many would have been: "We've seen off the Hun once, we can do it again."

Nick Ridout, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired), Lincolnshire

Medieval strongmen

I enjoyed reading Chris Given-Wilson's analysis of Henry IV, the founder of the Lancastrian dynasty (*Henry IV: The Usurper King*, February). It made me consider some of the startling parallels his reign shared with his Yorkist



GETTY



A depiction of the battle of Barnet, a decisive victory for Edward IV in the Wars of the Roses. As James Attew points out, Edward was an impressive military leader

counterpart, Edward IV.

Both monarchs deposed predecessors that were considered weak and ineffectual by contemporary standards (in Edward's case, Henry's grandson Henry VI). Both enjoyed significant martial reputations and, despite both facing critical domestic insurrection, neither was defeated in the field.

Both men landed at Ravenspur to claim the throne, in 1399 and 1471 respectively, and both disingenuously claimed that they only sought the return of their dukedoms from the incumbent monarch. (Though it is true that Edward had already reigned from 1461–70 and was intent on reclaiming his throne, rather than winning it for the first time, which was Henry's motive.)

Arguably, in each case, it was emerging victorious from battle, not diplomacy, that secured their thrones: Henry at Shrewsbury in 1403, Edward at Barnet and Tewkesbury in 1471.

I think this reinforces the belief that positive personal traits of the monarch, or perhaps perception of those traits by his contemporaries – including martial

prowess and forceful, decisive personalities – were vital for the security of a throne. The loyalty of nobles and their retainers was often personal, not dynastic, hence why both the Houses of Lancaster and York were eventually toppled following the reigns of Henry and Edward.

James Attew, Swindon

Correction

● Reader Conor Byrne has alerted us to the fact that the image on page 24 (*Deadly Rivals*, Christmas) shows the Earl of Bothwell's first wife, Lady Jean Bothwell, and not Mary, Queen of Scots, as the caption stated. Apologies for the error.

WRITE TO US

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SOCIAL MEDIA

What you've been saying on Twitter and Facebook



@HistoryExtra: What's your reaction to Oriel College deciding to keep the Cecil Rhodes statue?

Julie Gibbs The correct decision. You can't revise history to fit today's sensibilities

@retiredbrain Students come and go, Cecil Rhodes is part of Oxford's permanent history. It's correct that the statue should stay

Joseph Ferreira I still believe that, like the Confederate flag, it could have been relocated to a museum where a display could have put it into proper historic context

@cazp53 If we took down every statue that represented empire and old ways of thinking, our cities and cathedrals would be empty!

CarolynMCash Good news for common sense and victory over this political correctness garbage

@nedirien Right decision. Its removal would've cleared the way to destroy other controversial monuments

@GreenWill92 We mustn't erase from history those figures whose views don't accord with our own. We should learn from the bad, not deny it

@HistoryExtra: Should more be done in Britain to remember the Holocaust?

Sian E Evans It needs to be remembered - and its causes taught. Also, it should be made clear that whilst Jews were in the majority, it was not only them. Disabled persons, those of different political opinions, Gypsies all suffered too

Brigitte Webster No, enough is being done already. Better to focus on the present and future making sure that no more evil force will be allowed to take over ever again

Nicholas Kropacek How much more needs to be taught? It seems to dominate history teaching already

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Michael Wood on... **that Cecil Rhodes statue**

“It certainly needs an explanatory plaque... but is that enough?”

“This is the tale of two places: High Street in Oxford and the Matobo Hills near Bulawayo. In Oxford the statue of the imperialist Cecil Rhodes at Oriel College became the focus of a vociferous campaign demanding its removal earlier this year. My old college, Oriel takes history very seriously. After “careful consideration” it finally decided that it should remain but said it would add “a clear historical context to explain why it is there”.

That Rhodes was an imperialist with racist views, no one disputes. Many say you cannot judge him by the standards of our time. But by any standards his subjection of the people of southern Africa was driven by violence and racism, cheating King Lobengula of his mineral-rich kingdom with a mercenary army. A small portion of the vast wealth Rhodes accrued went to Oxford, founding scholarships that are open to people of all backgrounds. Bill Clinton was one; Nelson Mandela joined hands with the foundation before he died. But Rhodes’ statue still looks out over High Street, and despite the college’s decision to keep it there, some people have vowed to continue the campaign for its removal.

The legacy of imperialism is complex. In Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia), Robert Mugabe’s government recently said that though Rhodes’ statues had been removed after the country gained independence, his grave in the Matobos shouldn’t be touched. A spokesperson said: “Colonialism is part and parcel of our history.” Great as was the perfidy of Albion, that seems to me to be a sensible response to what are, after all, still tragic events for the people of Zimbabwe.

In 1979, at the end of the liberation war, I filmed in Rhodesia, the country named after Rhodes. I travelled on an armed freight train to a deserted Victoria Falls, hemmed in by guerrillas, its hotels empty, one hit by SAM missiles. Back in Bulawayo, I asked my hosts whether I could go out to the Matobo Hills to see Rhodes’ grave, which lay outside the security zone. We went on condition we were back in time for the curfew. The site lies 25 miles south of Bulawayo in brown granite hills with

fairy tale outcrops. Rhodes lies buried on the Hill of Spirits under a polished granite slab, next to Leander Starr Jameson, the colonial politician who led the 1896 Jameson Raid against the Boers (and, so the story goes, was the inspiration for Kipling’s poem *If*). The site guardian was an Ndebele, and he took me to a high point with breathtaking views all around the horizon. There he spoke of ancient traditions, of oracles and shrines still consulted by the spirit mediums of the Ndebele people; it is one of the sacred sites of southern Africa.

In the first liberation war, the *chimurenga* of the 1890s, that followed Rhodes’ annexation of Matabeleland and the death of King Lobengula, the spirit medium Nehanda was captured by the British and executed. In the 1970s war ‘grandmother’ Nehanda became an inspiration, with her photograph on Patriotic Front leaflets. The maternity ward in the main hospital in Harare is named after her.

Reflecting on those events, I have to say I am against statues being removed. I was sad to see Victoria’s go from the Victoria railway terminus in Mumbai, renamed the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) – even though there are few more worthy than the great 17th-century warrior King Shivaji to have a terminal named after them.

Rhodes’ deeds certainly require an explanatory plaque, as Oriel proposes. But is that enough? Campaigners say no: they still want the statue gone. But why not add a new one? How about Lobengula, King of the Matebele, whose heart was broken by Rhodes? Or Nehanda, the ‘ancestral spirit’ of the Shona who had at first encouraged hospitality to the British adventurers but died at their hands.

Oxford is a university of the world now. It has an Islamic Studies Centre; an African Studies Centre; a brand new China Centre. So open up, don’t close down. What better than to have an African hero – and heroine – looking out over High Street, reminding all who pass that rewriting the history of history is a core job for the historian; and that good history is one of the foundations of a better present – and a better future. ■

Michael Wood is professor of public history, University of Manchester. Catch episodes of his latest BBC TV series *The Story of China* on iPlayer

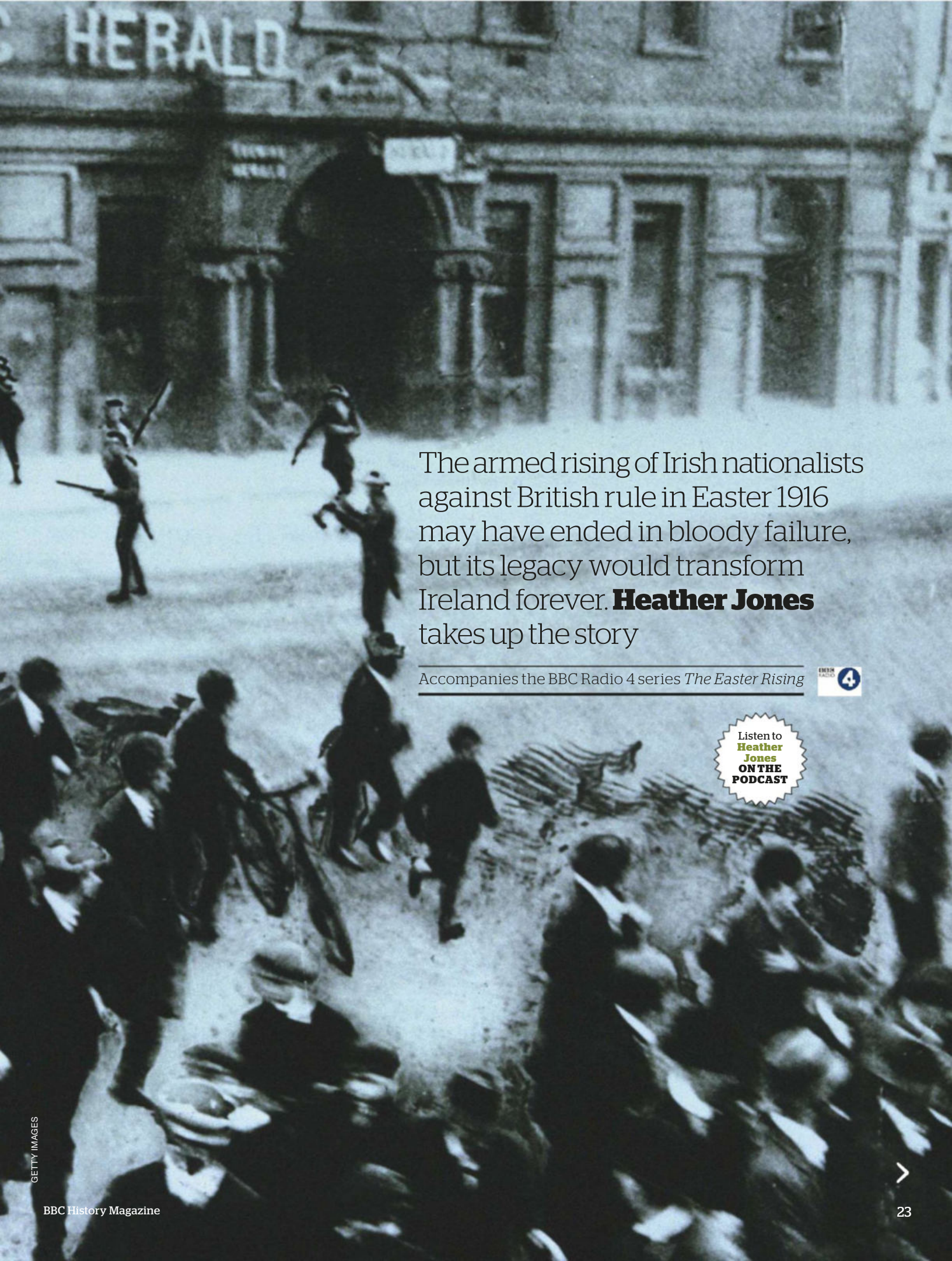


ILLUSTRATION BY FEMKE DE JONG

The Easter Rising

WHEN IRELAND WENT TO WAR

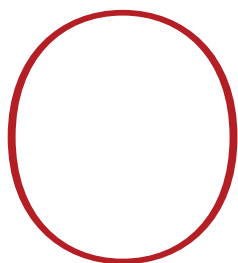
Members of the public scatter as British troops advance during the Easter Rising. Though the insurrection was put down in just six days, it unleashed a tidal wave of radical nationalism that would end in the partition of Ireland



The armed rising of Irish nationalists against British rule in Easter 1916 may have ended in bloody failure, but its legacy would transform Ireland forever. **Heather Jones** takes up the story

Accompanies the BBC Radio 4 series *The Easter Rising*





On 24 April 1916 the United Kingdom faced its greatest internal threat in 100 years. On a sleepy Easter bank holiday Monday, around 1,500 armed Irish nationalist

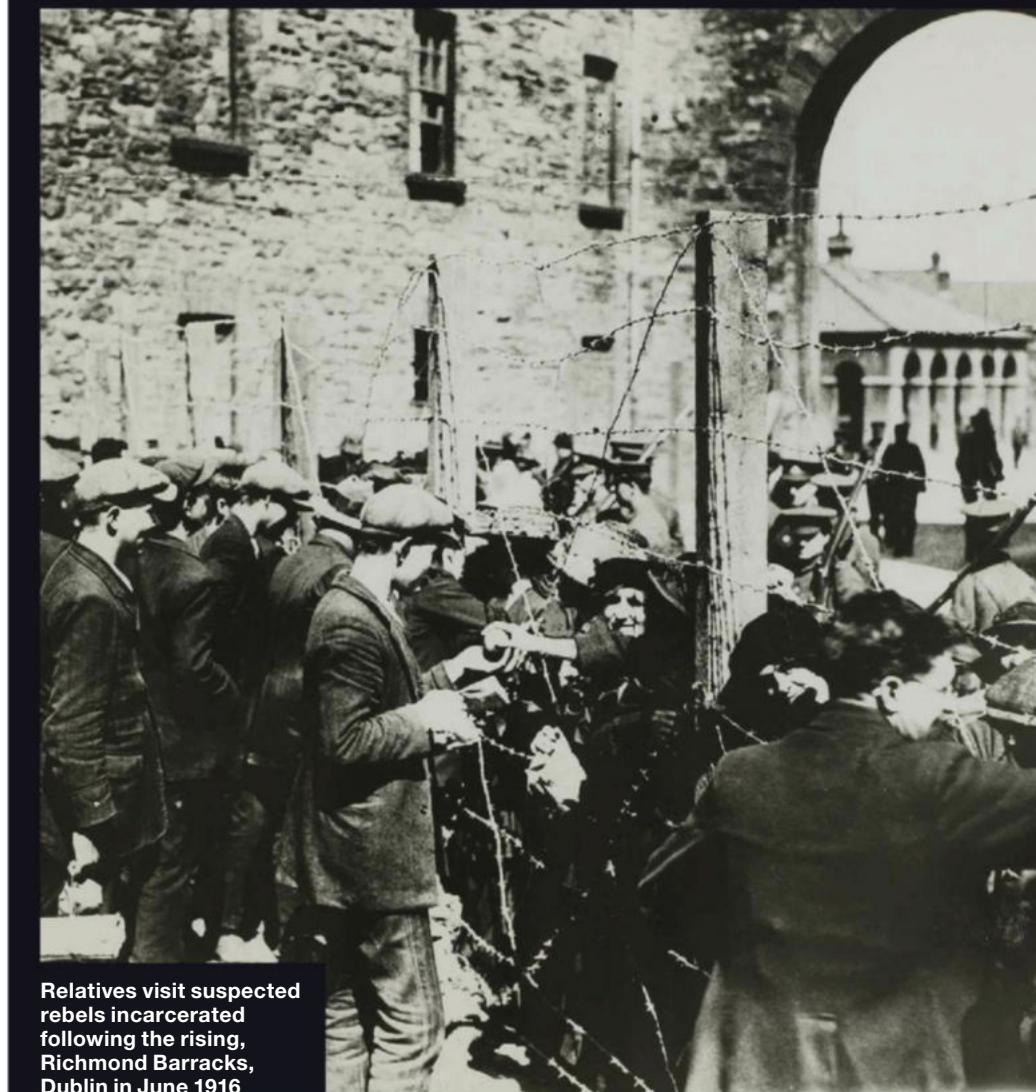
rebels, allied with Germany, seized control of Dublin, then a major city of the UK, and held the centre for six days. Their leaders' aspiration was to found an independent all-Ireland Republic – freed from the yoke of British rule – and they saw the use of violence as a legitimate, indeed romantic, means of doing so. For rebel ideologue Patrick Pearse: “The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed by the red wine of the battlefield.” The reality proved rather less bucolic: local police and soldiers were shot and killed without warning when the uprising began.

Ironically the rebels who caused such casualties – a disparate coalition of four groups – had greater social and gender justice as one of their aims. In a vividly written proclamation, issued at the start of the insurrection, they declared: “Irishmen and Irishwomen: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.” What happened next would cause carnage on the streets of Dublin, trigger a brutal British response, transform many Irish people's attitudes to independence and set in train a series of events that would lead to the partition of Ireland.

Armed force

The Easter Rising was planned by the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), a small group active in Ireland and the US, who wished to found an Irish Republic using armed force. The IRB had been recruiting among Irish nationalists in Dublin, many of whom were disillusioned by the extent of Ireland's support for Britain in the First World War. Youth culture proved especially receptive, particularly in middle-class intelligentsia circles where revolutionary nationalist attitudes had become popular in the decade prior to 1916.

Led by Tom Clarke and Sean MacDermott, and inspired by the European model of revolution of 1848, the IRB was extremely small and had no mass organisation of its own, or political party. Instead it infiltrated moderate nationalist movements, with the aim of getting their members to act as foot-soldiers in its future rebellion.



Relatives visit suspected rebels incarcerated following the rising, Richmond Barracks, Dublin in June 1916

“Struggling on the western front, the British were totally unprepared for an urban insurgency”

The IRB's main success was in gaining key leadership positions in the Irish Volunteers – a militia founded to support the imminent introduction of Home Rule – which provided the bulk of the 1916 rebel combatants.

The British had agreed to introduce Home Rule, a limited form of self-government within the United Kingdom, pending the outcome of the First World War. An Irish parliament would administer Irish domestic issues, while the British parliament at Westminster would retain control over foreign affairs, defence, taxation and overseas trade. Although controversial, it had the

support of most of the population. However, Ireland's Unionist minority opposed it, fearing an Irish parliament would be dominated by Catholics.

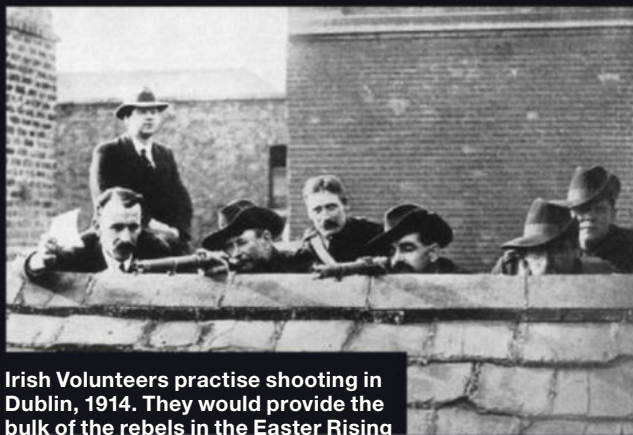
By 1914, the schism over Home Rule had taken Ireland to the brink of civil war. Unionists had founded a 100,000-strong militia, the Ulster Volunteer Force, to resist its implementation, while moderate nationalists set up the Irish Volunteer Force in response.

But the outbreak of the First World War saw the two sides rally to the war effort. The majority of both militias enlisted in the British Army, making up a large component of the 210,000 Irishmen who served. Critically, though, a rump of 13,000 dissident Irish Volunteers remained in Ireland, rejecting the war. Believing that “England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity”, they proved easy targets for IRB machinations.

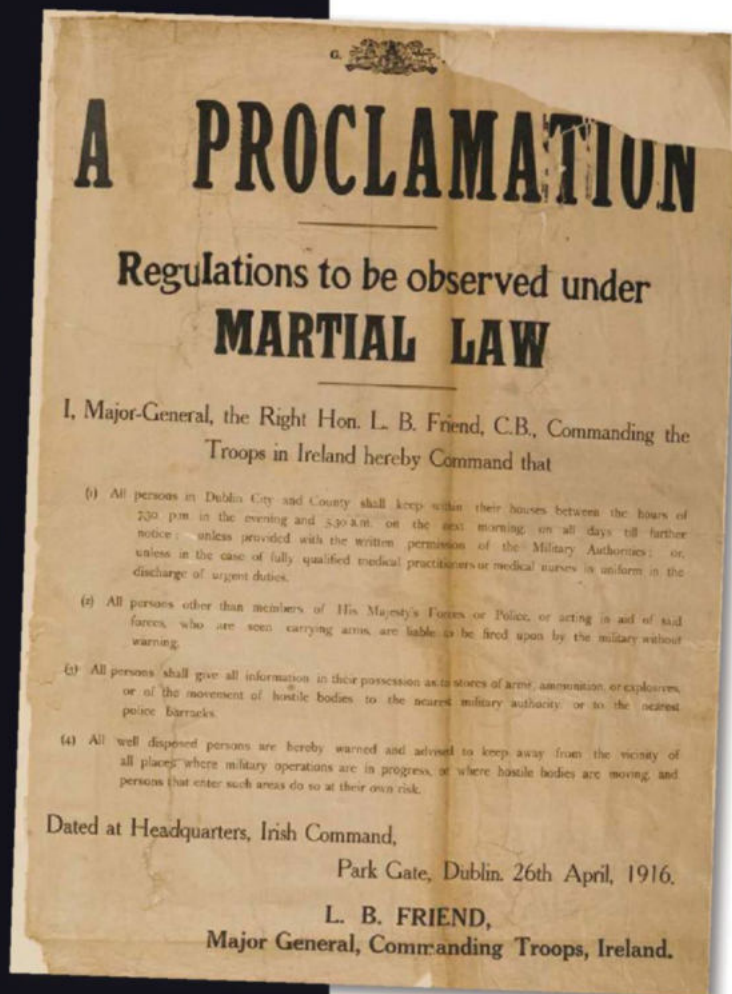
Two other organisations also provided the rising's fighters: Cumann na mBan, a women's nationalist group, and the Irish Citizen Army, a socialist workers' militia of around 339 members, led by James Connolly, formed to protect striking workers in 1913.



Dublin buildings feel the full force of the fighting. A British gunboat shelled rebel positions from the river Liffey



Irish Volunteers practise shooting in Dublin, 1914. They would provide the bulk of the rebels in the Easter Rising



A proclamation declares martial law. The British reaction to the rising saw shootings and mass internment

Germany had also pledged support. However, the anticipated German consignment of weapons due to be delivered to Ireland just before the rising never materialised.

This was not the only last-minute calamity to blight the rebels' cause. The Irish Volunteers' chief of staff, Eoin MacNeill, tried to prevent the rising, forbidding his men from gathering on Easter Sunday, the symbolic day the IRB had chosen for the insurrection to start. MacNeill believed a rising had no chance of military success and no popular mandate: "Our country is not a poetical abstraction [...] it is our duty to get our country on side," he believed. Furious, the IRB postponed its action to Easter Monday but could only get word that the uprising was still going ahead to its supporters in Dublin. As a result the rebellion was almost entirely limited to the city.

Fortunately for the rebels, British intelligence in Ireland was a shambles due to the exigencies of wartime. Most of the rebel leaders had been under police surveillance but even well-known militants like Thomas Clarke, who had served a 15-year prison term,

were able to proselytise relatively freely, and their secret insurrection planning was not picked up. Worse still, when Sir Roger Casement, the negotiator the rebels had sent to request German aid for the uprising, was captured on 21 April, landing on a Kerry beach from a German submarine, the authorities missed a golden opportunity to uncover the rebels' plans.

It was the Easter holidays after all. The Dublin elite duly departed for the races at Fairyhouse, leaving a city with few police on duty. Early on 24 April, Matthew Nathan, the under-secretary for Ireland, met with the head of intelligence at Dublin Castle to discuss whether Casement's arrest indicated any increased security risk. It was too late. Gunfire interrupted their deliberations – as the castle gate came under attack and an unarmed police sentry was gunned down. The Easter Rising had begun.

Futile trenches

Surprise was the rebels' only real advantage. They had little grasp of strategy or tactics. A unit under Countess Markievicz dug trenches

in St Stephen's Green, all overlooked by tall buildings. Patrick Pearse carried a sword.

The rebels tried to seize key communication sites – their headquarters was the General Post Office – and threw up street barricades. Yet they failed to capture the seat of British administration in Ireland at Dublin Castle, or, crucially the ports and stations – through which British reinforcements, including Irish troops diverted from going to the war, poured.

Struggling on the western front, the British were unprepared for dealing with an urban insurgency at home. Unfortunately for the rebels, however, it wasn't long before the authorities regained their composure – and, once they'd done so, their response was ruthless. Prime Minister Asquith sent in troop reinforcements, and a gunboat on the river Liffey shelled the rebel positions. The city centre was left in ruins. Onlookers likened O'Connell Street, the central boulevard, to Ypres.

The bitter fighting that engulfed central Dublin as British forces battled to regain control claimed 450 lives: 62 of the dead were rebels; 132 soldiers and police. As he marched

Guns, gaols and martyrology

How Ireland is commemorating the Easter rising

In 2016, Ireland faces the challenge of commemorating the Easter Rising's centenary without re-opening old wounds. The north fears the centenary might provoke hankering for the fulfilment of the proclamation's ideal of a 32-county independent Irish Republic. This is no idle concern: the 50th anniversary, in 1966, with its gun salutes and martyrology, likely contributed to the outbreak of the Troubles in 1969. In the Irish Republic, in an election year, all parties see commemorating the rising – the perceived moment the republic was founded in spirit (if not in legal fact) – as a vote-winner.

The problem is what kind of commemoration to adopt. Since 2012, the emphasis has been upon Ireland's 'decade of centenaries', a deliberate policy to allow acknowledgement of anniversaries important to groups silenced in the history of independent Ireland for so long – Ireland's First World War dead, Ulster unionists and Home Rule supporters. The centenary of the Home Rule Bill was solemnly marked in 2012; this year, unionists and nationalists together will commemorate the Somme.

But difficulties remain. Dublin has a Sinn Féin lord mayor. Her party is running its own commemorations, glorifying the events of 1916. In doing so, they may undermine the more sober government projects, which include restoring 1916 rising sites such as Kilmainham Gaol, where the leaders were executed. Countering accusations that it is failing in its patriotic duties, government plans also include a traditional military parade through Dublin (proposals to invite a member of the British royal family were shelved in response to protests). Every school in the republic will receive a copy of the flag and the rebels' proclamation.

The public appetite for history has been the main beneficiary of centenary controversies, with a boom in interest in both the rising and Ireland's First World War. Although the politicians have struggled, the population has largely grasped the complex, messy and indeed familial realities of the Irish-British relationship in 1916.

The rebel leader Éamonn Ceannt was executed at Kilmainham Gaol, which is being restored for the centenary of the rising



Children collect firewood from buildings levelled during the fighting. Observers likened parts of post-rising Dublin to Ypres

into the city, one British officer in the Sherwood Foresters, Friedrich Dietrichsen, by chance met his Irish wife and children, who had been sent to Dublin to escape Zeppelin raids. The reunion was short-lived: within hours Dietrichsen was killed in a rebel ambush at Mount Street Bridge.

The majority of the dead, however, were innocent civilians caught in the crossfire – the youngest of all was 22-month-old Christina Caffrey, who was shot in her mother's arms.

Most of the rebel strongholds – increasingly isolated from one another – could not hold

out long against trained soldiers. With the military situation hopeless, the rebels decided to bow to the inevitable and surrender.

Yet, once they had laid down their arms, the rebels found that the British were in no mood for clemency. Mass internment, curfews and house-to-house searches followed the arbitrary shootings that had occurred during the rising. Then, infamously, the authorities began executing the rising's leaders after closed court martials. James Connolly, already dying from wounds and unable to stand, was shot strapped to a chair. The Irish



“One rebel, dying from his wounds and unable to stand, was shot strapped to a chair”

electoral credit, becoming the party of choice for the surviving rebels.

The Easter Rising caused a great deal of soul-searching. Irish nationalists who had volunteered for the British Army in the First World War recognised that the rebel leaders' executions would trump their experiences. “These men will go down in history as heroes and martyrs,” wrote Tom Kettle, a nationalist MP, “and I will go down – if I go down at all – as a bloody British officer.” Sadly, Kettle would indeed go down, dying on the Somme.

A great irony

It wasn't just nationalists who saw the landscape transform around them. The radicalisation of the Irish public in the wake of the rising left no room for compromise with Ulster's unionists – who, when the Government of Ireland Act came into force in 1920, were granted their own home rule parliament. It was one of the great ironies of Irish history that, having opposed Home Rule for decades, unionists now saw its establishment in six northern counties as a shield from the republican insurrection that erupted in 1919.

The 1916 rebels embarked upon their uprising with the goal of transforming Ireland for good – as rebel Éamonn Ceannt wrote to his wife before his execution, “I die a noble death for Ireland's freedom. Men and women will vie with one another to shake your dear hand.” This they undoubtedly achieved. But at a cost: the decades of violence that attended the dream of establishing a 32-county independent republic. **II**

public was appalled. Journalist Warren Wells described it as watching “blood dripping from under a closed door”, while the MP John Dillon, a moderate Irish nationalist who had promoted Ireland staying in the UK, declared in parliament: “You are washing out our whole life-work in a sea of blood.”

Dillon was right. Britain's bludgeoning response only served to radicalise the Irish public. Soon, increasing numbers were demanding independence – and a tidal wave of nationalism was unleashed that would lead to the secession of 26 of the 32 counties of

Ireland from the UK to form the Irish Free State in 1922, the antecedent of today's Republic of Ireland. This wave would wash up on foreign shores, as nationalists, emboldened by Ireland's example, began to challenge British imperial authorities across the globe.

Even as the British clamped down on the rebels, they had no idea who was behind the violent insurrection. The press coined it the ‘Sinn Féin rebellion’ after a fringe nationalist political group that was not involved in the uprising. Despite this, the misattribution stuck. Sinn Féin was happy to take the

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RADIO

► The BBC Radio 4 series **The Easter Rising**, presented by Heather Jones, begins on 18 March



ON THE PODCAST

Heather Jones discusses the Easter Rising
► [historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/podcasts](https://www.bbc.com/historyextra/podcasts)

The wild man of County Carlow

In the first of an occasional series profiling remarkable, yet unheralded, characters from history, **Clare Walker Gore** introduces a severely disabled Irishman who trekked 4,000 miles across Europe and Asia before making waves in the House of Commons

ILLUSTRATION BY STAVROS DAMOS

When Arthur MacMurrough Kavanagh took his seat in the House of Commons in 1866, you might think that he was doing exactly what was expected of him. The head of one of the oldest aristocratic families in Ireland, and the owner of a great estate, what could be more predictable than that Arthur should follow in his father's stead and enter parliament?

In fact, this was probably the last thing that had been expected of him. When he was born in 1831, Arthur hadn't just been the 14th child and fourth son, with a negligible chance of inheriting – he had been born with severely foreshortened arms and legs.

Such a disability may have condemned a poorer child to penury and stymied the career of even the wealthiest. His father, Thomas Kavanagh, a keen sportsman and famously hard rider, was devastated by what he saw as the catastrophe of a son without hands and feet. What could be expected of such a child, in a culture that so valued physical strength and sporting prowess in young men? He couldn't walk; he couldn't follow his brothers to school; he couldn't keep up the family tradition for younger sons and join the navy. It must have seemed to his father, who died when Arthur was six, that his youngest son couldn't do much at all.

A crackshot

Had he lived a little longer, Thomas might have revised that opinion. By the time Arthur came of age, it was clear that he was a force to be reckoned with: he had become a notable

horse rider, a crack shot and, it was said, a distinctly wild young man. This wildness is one explanation that has been offered for his mother's extraordinary decision to banish him from Ireland at the age of 18 and to send him, along with his brother and tutor, on an incredibly dangerous attempt to travel overland from Scandinavia to India, a journey of well over 4,000 miles.

According to Arthur's more sensationalist biographers, his mother sent him on this expedition hoping that he wouldn't return. If so, she badly miscalculated – Arthur was the only one of the trio who came back alive.

Arthur seemed to positively relish the dangers and privations of their travels, recording them for posterity in a daily journal. He described the social whirlwind of their time in St Petersburg and Moscow, the balls, the parties and the drunken revels. He wrote of their journey across Persia, of sleeping on the ground in winter and undergoing "the trial of a water cure" as his frozen garments defrosted, of being "pelted diligently" by suspicious villagers and of riding over narrow mountain passes with the prospect of being "dashed to a thousand pieces" every time his horse slipped.

Everything, right down to the challenges of foreign food, is preserved in these meticulous diaries – everything, that is, apart from the fortnight he spent in the harem of Persian prince Malichus Mirza, recuperating from an illness. Whether because he was too ill to write or because it would have been ungentlemanly to record what went on there, he committed nothing to paper – although

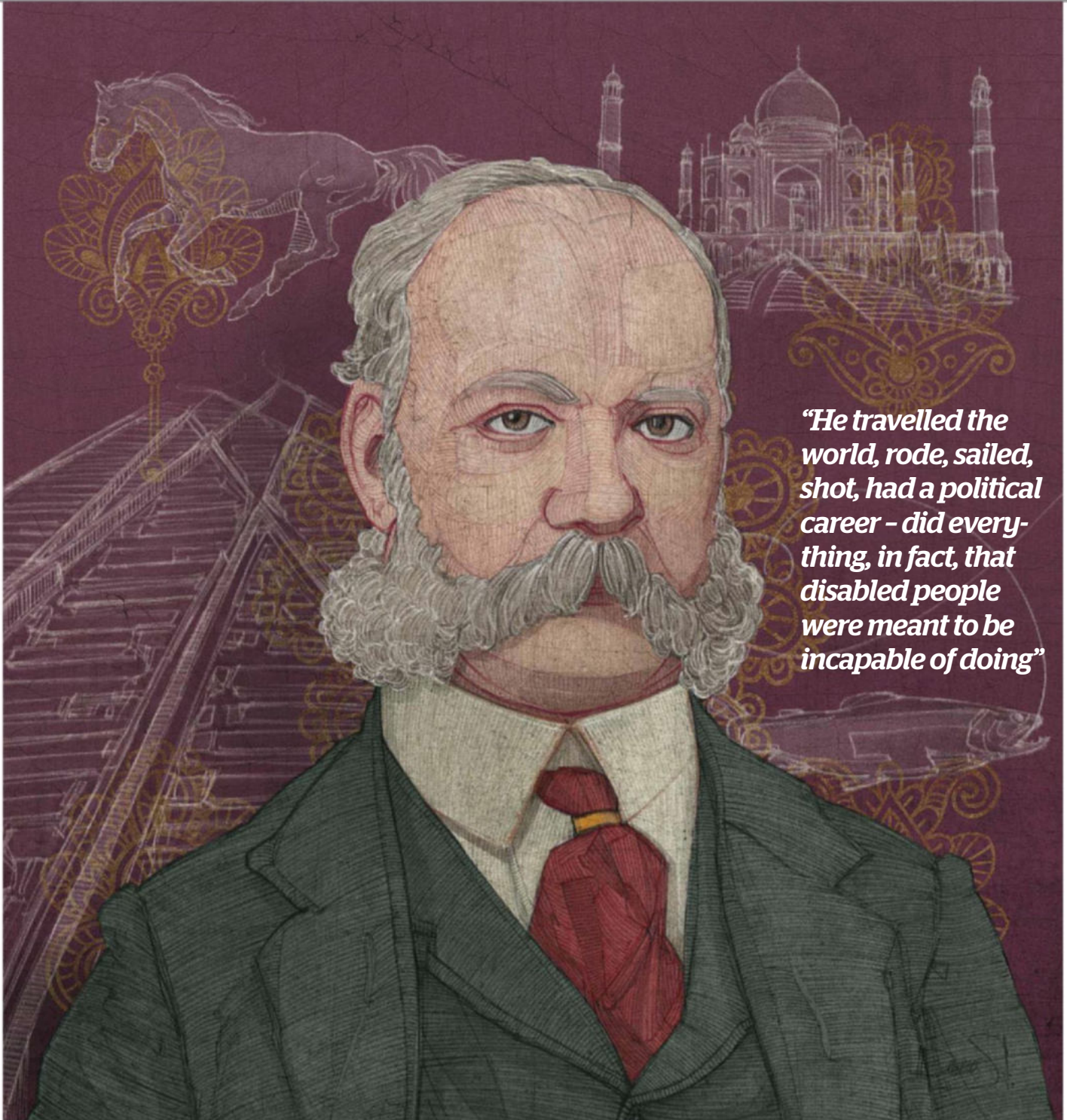
he certainly seems to have taken pleasure in teasing his censorious tutor about it.

Perhaps it is no wonder that when Arthur returned to Ireland as heir of the financially precarious family estate at Borris House in County Carlow (following his elder brothers' deaths), he seems to have been undaunted. He set about rescuing the family fortunes, saving the estate from financial ruin through careful management and long-sighted investment. He extended the railway line from Dublin across his estates, developing local industries and taking a keen interest in the welfare of his tenants.

Burned in effigy

But if Arthur was a relatively benevolent landlord, he was implacably opposed to the idea of tenants' rights and of Home Rule for Ireland, taking his seat in parliament as a Conservative. For over a decade, his parliamentary career was a success. He was even commended by his political enemy William Gladstone and, despite the turning of the tide towards Irish nationalism, he seems to have truly believed that his tenants were behind him. It is said that when he saw the bonfires burning on his estate on the night of the 1880 general election, he thought his tenants were celebrating his victory. In fact, they were burning him in effigy.

Arthur never lived at Borris again, but remained in London until his death in 1889. His wife, Frances, remained by his side. The couple married young and it seems to have been a true meeting of minds, with Frances aiding Arthur in all his projects for the estate



“He travelled the world, rode, sailed, shot, had a political career – did everything, in fact, that disabled people were meant to be incapable of doing”

and accompanying him on his yachting trips and foreign travels. They had seven children, the eldest of whom eventually represented County Carlow in parliament, as his father had done before him. Perhaps bowing to the inevitable, he took his seat as a nationalist.

Arthur’s descendents still live at Borris House. But his most important legacy may not be in the bricks and mortar of the stately

home where he lived. As a disabled man who travelled the world, rode, sailed, shot, had a political career – did everything, in fact, that disabled people were meant to be incapable of doing – Arthur was a trailblazer. His extraordinary achievements represent a sustained refusal to accept the limitations others would impose upon him: surely a life to be celebrated. ■

Clare Walker Gore is a junior research fellow at the University of Cambridge. She is one of the BBC’s New Generation Thinkers for 2015–16

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MAGAZINE

Spectre at the feast

An allegory depicting Elizabeth I in her later years, with the figure of death looking over her shoulder – just as, in a very real sense, the threat of starvation loomed over her subjects after a series of terrible harvests



The dark side of Elizabethan England

The Elizabethan era is often painted as a golden age. Yet, says **James Sharpe**, for thousands of people life was anything but golden, blighted by violence, vagrancy and crushing hunger



A woodcut shows an idyllic harvesting scene from the 1600s. In the previous century, the 'Merrie England' of Elizabeth I was marred by disastrous crop failures



Interest in Elizabeth I and her reign (1558–1603) seems limitless, and invariably suffused with admiration – an attitude epitomised in *The Times* of 24 March 2003, on the quatercentenary of the queen's death:

L “Tolerance found a patron and religion its balance, seas were navigated and an empire embarked upon and a small nation defended itself against larger enemies and found a voice and a purpose... Something in her reign taught us what our country is, and why it matters. And as her reign came to craft a sense of national identity that had not been found before, so she came to embody our best selves: courageous, independent, eccentric, amusing, capricious and reasonable, when reason was all. The greatest prince this country has produced was a prince in skirts.”

In an ICM poll for *Microsoft Encarta* at the same time, 55 per cent of respondents thought Elizabeth had introduced new foods, notably curry, into Britain, while one in 10 credited her with bringing corgis to our shores.

More soberly, in 2002 Elizabeth was one of just two women (the other, Princess Diana) in BBC Two's list of '10 Greatest Britons'. Books, films, newspaper articles and plays have all played their part in polishing the Virgin Queen's reputation. There have been many biographies (around one a year from 1927 to

1957); countless novels; and Edward German's 1902 operetta *Merrie England*, whose very title tells us what Elizabethan England was apparently like. More recently the Michael Hirst/Shekhar Kapur *Elizabeth* movies concluded that, under Elizabeth, England became the most prosperous and powerful nation in Europe.

Social breakdown

However, not everyone who actually lived through the Elizabethan era was quite so convinced that they were in a golden age. Take Edward Hext, an experienced Somerset justice of the peace, who on 25 September 1596 wrote to Lord Burghley predicting imminent social breakdown in the county.

Text reported that thefts were prevalent, most of them carried out by criminal vagrants who would rather steal than work. He also complained that there had been food riots, with rioters declaring that “they must not starve, they will not starve”. Class hatred was manifest, he wrote, with the poor saying that “the rich men have gotten all into their hands and will starve the poor”.

Hext was not, it seems, a lone doom merchant. On 28 September 1596 we find William Lambarde, another veteran justice of the peace, telling the Kent quarter sessions at Maidstone that those in authority needed to act swiftly – or the countryside would erupt.

This wasn't merely a case of two old men romanticising about the 'good old days'. Hext and Lambard knew they were on the edge of a major social crisis. The harvests of 1594 and 1595 were bad enough, but 1596 was disastrous, sending grain prices rocketing to their highest levels of the 16th century, with grim consequences for thousands.

This crisis has rarely featured in popular accounts of Elizabeth's reign. Yet it not only provides an alternative perspective on what life was like for ordinary men and women in the 16th century, far from the glittering court of the Virgin Queen, but also deepens our understanding of how the regime functioned.

At the heart of the problems confronting Elizabethan England was the challenge of

“They were on the edge of a major social crisis.

The harvests of 1594 and 1595 were bad, but 1596 was disastrous”

Common people

An Elizabethan street scene. England's population soared during the 16th century, with dire results for those at the bottom of the social ladder



“300 Londoners, marching north to embark for war service in Ireland, mutinied at Towcester, elected a leader, and took the town over”

dearth, of which those of 1594–97 were remarkable for the misery they engendered.

Yet for a prosperous yeoman farmer with a surplus of grain to sell, bad harvests could be a blessing: you had enough grain to feed your family, and enjoyed enhanced profits from the grain you took to market. If, however, you were a middling peasant, normally termed a ‘husbandman’, your position would be badly squeezed by harvest failure. Families in this stratum desperately tried to maintain their status until their inability to meet mounting debts or some personal disaster sent them down to the labouring poor. As a result, by 1600, many villages in the south and Midlands were becoming polarised between a rich, and locally powerful, class of yeoman farmers and a mass of poor people.

The impact of failed harvests on local society is illustrated vividly by the parish registers for Kendal in Westmorland. These record that, following the disastrous harvest of 1596, just under 50 parishioners were buried in December that year – compared with a monthly average of just 20 in 1595. The death toll remained high throughout 1597, peaking at 70 in a particularly grim March.

London also suffered badly. Here, an average year would see burials running at a slightly higher level than baptisms (with the early modern capital’s formidable population increase being largely fuelled by immigration). Yet there was, it seems, nothing average about 1597: in that year, around twice as many Londoners were buried as baptised – and the seasonal pattern of the

burials indicates that famine was the cause.

No segment of England’s population was more terrifyingly vulnerable to high grain prices than prisoners awaiting trial in its county jails. The basic provision for feeding them was bread paid for by a county rate, a rate that did not increase in line with grain prices. The results were predictably catastrophic. We know of 12 coroners’ inquests on prisoners who died in Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex county jails in 1595 – and 33 in 1596. In 1597, that rocketed to 117. Some of these deaths resulted from starvation and many famine-induced maladies: the Elizabethan jail was an extremely efficient incubator of disease.

The burden of warfare

The social dislocation caused by the bad harvests of the 1590s was exacerbated by warfare. England was continually at war between 1585 and Elizabeth’s death in 1603 – in the Netherlands in support of the Dutch Revolt; in Normandy and Brittany in support of French Protestants in that country’s wars of religion; on the high seas against the Spanish; and, most draining of all, in Ireland.

Conflict was costly (the government spent £5.5m on war between 1585 and 1603 – much of it funded by taxpayers), it was not particularly successful, and involved the raising of large numbers of soldiers. Kent, a strategically important county, contributed 6,000 troops from a population of 130,000 between 1591 and 1602.

Some towns where troops were concentrated saw serious unrest. Soldiers at Chester, the prime embarkation port for Ireland, mutinied in 1594, 1596 and 1600. The first of these episodes, in which the 1,500 soldiers billeted in and around the city “daily fought and quarrelled”, was only suppressed

when the mayor of Chester declared martial law, set up a gibbet and hanged three men identified as ringleaders.

In 1598, 300 Londoners marching north to embark for war service in Ireland, mutinied at Towcester, elected a leader, and took the town over.

Soldiers were normally recruited from the rougher elements of society, and the experience of soldiering in late 16th-century conditions did little to soften them. As a result, soldiers returning from wars tended to join the



Elizabethan alter ego
Society became polarised between the wealthy (above left) and the desperately poor such as this beggar (right)

feeding its soaring population. In 1500 there was around 2.5 million people in England. By 1650, that number had soared to more than 5 million – the economy simply couldn’t keep up. This manifested itself particularly in two ways. Firstly, the price of grain rose disproportionately: while the population of England more or less doubled between 1500 and 1650, the cost of grain – wheat, rye, barley, oats – increased six-fold. This had grave implications, since a large (and increasing) proportion of the population depended on buying bread, or bread-grain, in the market.

Secondly, real wages – the purchasing power of a day’s pay – failed to keep up with prices. Whereas the price of grain rose by a factor of six, real wages did little more than double. And, of course, given the glut of labourers, the chances of finding work, even at reduced levels of pay, diminished. Few people were wage earners in the modern sense, but most of the poor were dependent on waged work for a proportion of their income. The declining buying power of real wages pushed many into acute misery.

As a result, the Elizabethan period witnessed the emergence of poverty on a new scale. By the 1590s, the lot of the poor and the labouring classes was bad enough at the best of times. What made it worse was harvest failure, for the steady upward progress of grain prices was punctuated by years of

ranks of vagrant criminals.

The crisis elicited a variety of reactions from those disadvantaged by it. One was to complain, which led to prosecutions for seditious words. In March 1598, Henry Danyell of Ash in Kent declared that “he hoped to see such war in this realm as to afflict the rich men of this country to requite their hardness of heart towards the poor”, and that “the Spanish were better than the people of this land and therefore he had rather they were here than the rich men of the country”.

His were isolated sentiments, perhaps, but it is interesting that some inhabitants of ‘Merrie England’ were advocating class warfare and support for the nation’s enemies.

Resorting to crime

Theft was another remedy. Crime records from Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex suggest that there was a massive rise in property offences (larceny, burglary, house-breaking and robbery) – from an average of around 250 a year in the early 1590s to about 430 in 1598. Hard times were clearly encouraging the poor to steal, even though most of the offences were capital. Indeed, records suggest that just over 100 people were executed for property crimes in these five counties in 1598.

Another reaction to high grain prices was a rash of grain riots across southern England. The ‘riot’, at least in its early stages, had much of the character of a demonstration, and the objectives were limited to controlling prices in the local market or preventing the export of grain from their area – there is little evidence of grain rioters envisaging what would today be called social revolution.

The one incident where we know such an outcome was envisaged was a complete failure. This was the Oxfordshire Rising of 1596 when, following unsuccessful petitioning by the poor of the county authorities, five men began to formulate plans to lead a revolt. When the ringleaders met on Enslow Hill in the north of the county to spearhead their revolution, they found that nobody had turned out to join them. And so the men made their way home, only to be arrested.

Following their interrogation and torture, two were hanged, drawn and quartered on the very hill on which their projected rising was supposed to begin, and the three others disappear from the historical record, presumably having died in prison.

This crisis of the 1590s illuminates serious tensions in Elizabethan society far removed from the stereotypes of Gloriana’s triumphant reign. But it also, perhaps surprisingly, demonstrates the regime’s durability. People



The poor become poorer A beggar is whipped in the streets, c1567, in a period when hard times caused by poor harvests and the burden of warfare helped create more vagrants

“People might steal, they might participate in local grain riots but the chances of getting a large-scale popular revolt off the ground were seriously limited”

might complain, they might steal, they might participate in local grain riots. But, as the Oxfordshire Rising demonstrates, the chances of getting a large-scale popular revolt off the ground were seriously limited.

But why? The answer comes in two parts. First of all, over the Tudor period, England’s county and town administrations established much closer links with central authority in the shape of the Privy Council (the body of advisors to the queen). They were learning the importance of working together to ensure the smooth running of government.

The second half of the answer is provided by the increasing social polarisation that accompanied Elizabeth’s reign. In 1549, the Midlands and southern England were rocked by a large-scale popular revolt led by wealthy farmers and other notables – the natural leaders of village society.

Over the following half a century, with the divide between rich and poor steadily growing, these same village leaders – the group from which parish constables, churchwardens and poor law officials were drawn – began to regard controlling the poor

as a major part of parish government. They increasingly saw themselves as stakeholders in, rather than sworn opponents of, the Elizabethan regime.

But although they contained the crisis of the 1590s, government officials at all levels must have been painfully aware of the strain it imposed. When parliament met in October 1597 many of the county members would have had experience of interrogating thieves, placating rioters and fixing grain prices in their local markets, while many borough MPs would have been very aware of the pressure put on their towns’ poor relief systems.

And it was that pressure that produced the crisis’s one major, concrete legacy – the near-comprehensive Poor Law Act of 1598, rounded off by further legislation in 1601. It may be more prosaic perhaps than Francis Drake’s circumnavigation of the world or the defeat of the Armada, but this piece of legislation has to rank among the defining achievements of Elizabeth’s reign.

The two acts provided for a nationally legislated yet locally administered poor relief system that was in advance of anything then existing in a state of England’s size. They were arguably the much-feted Elizabethan Age’s most important legacy to later generations, and were inspired by the horrors of those harvest failures from 1594 to 1597. Perhaps the poor – who during those years resorted to theft, were reduced to vagrancy, rioted or were indicted for seditious words – had achieved something after all. ■

James Sharpe is professor of early modern history at the University of York. He is currently working on a new history of violence in England

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► **Early Modern England: A Social History 1550–1760** by James Sharpe (Bloomsbury, 1997)



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The Tudors' unlikely allies

This composite image shows Elizabeth I's Armada portrait, alongside Abd al-Wahid bin Masoud bin Muhammad al-Annuri, ambassador for Morocco – one of the Tudor queen's trading partners



Cut off from much of Catholic Europe, Elizabeth I's regime embarked on a remarkable relationship with the Islamic world, as **Jerry Brotton** reveals



 On 25 February 1570, a papal bull issued in Rome by Pope Pius V, entitled *Regnans in Excelsis* ('Reigning on High'), excommunicated Queen Elizabeth I. The bull condemned "Elizabeth, the pretended Queen of England" for "having seized on the kingdom and monstrously usurped the place of supreme head of the church in all England". It concluded: "We do out of the fullness of our apostolic power declare the aforesaid Elizabeth as being a heretic and a favourer of heretics, and her adherents in the matters aforesaid, to have incurred the sentence of excommunication."

The bull's consequences are well known. It divided English Catholics over whether or not to rebel against Elizabeth, while strengthening patriotic support for the queen and pushing her towards more aggressive Protestant policies at home and abroad. Pius's decision tacitly supported a series of attempts to assassinate Elizabeth and ultimately led to the sailing of the Armada in 1588. But it also had another less well-known but equally significant outcome: it allowed the Tudors to establish a series of commercial and military alliances with the Islamic world on a scale never seen before in England.

A common enemy

Over the next 30 years, Elizabeth would broker deals with the Ottoman, Persian and Saadian (Moroccan) empires that saw hundreds, if not thousands, of Elizabethan men and women travelling across Muslim lands. Some converted to Islam, others traded amicably, while Elizabeth's diplomats travelled back and forth between Whitehall, Marrakech, Constantinople and Qazvin (the Persian empire's capital), concocting Anglo-Islamic alliances as a bulwark against what at the time were Islam's and

Protestantism's common enemy: Catholicism.

The reasons for this surprising and generally overlooked alliance go back to the rise of Islam since the time of the crusades, and the more unforeseen consequences of the 16th-century Reformation. The fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 proved to be just one particularly dramatic moment in the apparently irresistible global rise of Islamic power in the face of a weak and divided Christianity. The papacy preached that the Muslim faith was nothing more than a garbled mixture of paganism and apostasy, although such claims were difficult to square with the power of a theocracy that, at the time Luther was calling for reform within the Christian church, ruled north Africa, the Arabian peninsula, Greece, the Holy Land (including Jerusalem), central Asia, most of the Indian subcontinent, large swathes of eastern Europe, and had even reached China.

This should not disguise the conflicts and tensions inherent within the rather unsatisfactory term, 'the Islamic world'. The Sunni Ottoman empire clashed with the neighbouring Persian Shia empire, and had defeated the powerful Egyptian Mamluk sultanate in 1517 to become undisputed defenders of Islam's holy cities and pilgrimage routes. In north-west Africa the Saadian dynasty (of Arab descent) played fast and loose with their theological distance and independence from the Ottomans.

Nevertheless, to most Christian princes, the Islamic world looked like a militarily and

"Excommunication allowed the Tudors to establish alliances with the Islamic world on a scale never seen before"

culturally superior superpower, to be regarded with fear but also admiration.

Martin Luther saw things slightly differently. As he launched his attack on Rome, he argued ingeniously that the Ottomans were part of God's divine plan, and that "to make war on the Turks is to rebel against God, who punishes our sins through them". He regarded the pope and the Turk as two versions of Antichrist, but his initial refusal to support a holy war against the Ottoman empire led the papacy to brand him as a heretic and little better than a Turk.

Writing in his *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (1528), Sir Thomas More echoed these attacks, referring to "Luther's sect" as worse than "all the Turks, all the Saracens, all the heretics". By the 1530s, as Luther's reformed religious beliefs found favour in England, Catholics were conflating Protestants and Muslims as two versions of the same heresy.

Anglo-Moroccan alliance

With her excommunication in 1570, the wily queen was quick to turn this situation to her political and commercial advantage. Since the 13th century, various church councils had forbidden trade with Muslim societies, which was punishable with excommunication. Covert trade still continued – Venice and France notoriously turned a blind eye to the injunctions – but by 1570, as a Protestant nation led by an excommunicated sovereign placed beyond papal sanction, Tudor England was suddenly freer than any other Christian country to trade with the Islamic world with ecclesiastical impunity.

Even before her excommunication, Elizabeth had cautiously encouraged trade with kingdoms like Morocco, and by 1570 English merchants were importing goods worth £28,000 a year (more than the entire revenue from the Portuguese trade), including 250 tonnes of sugar (much to the infamous distress of the queen's teeth) valued at £18,000. Most of the transactions were undertaken with Morocco's sizeable Jewish community, particularly its wealthy 'sugar barons', including one called Isaac Cabeça who traded sugar for English cloth before going bankrupt in 1568 and being named in a series of insolvency trials in the High Court of Admiralty and Chancery.

By the 1570s Elizabeth sent Edmund Hogan, a member of the Mercers' Company from Hackney to negotiate with the Saadian sultan Abu Marwan Abd al-Malik I, trading English weapons for Moroccan saltpetre (a key ingredient in making gunpowder).

Encouraged by the Moroccan trade's success, Elizabeth and her counsellors – especially Francis Walsingham – proposed an even more ambitious alliance with the



The holy war
Pope Pius V (top), whose papal bull inadvertently opened the way for English-Muslim relations; Martin Luther (bottom) argued for a pragmatic approach to Islam

Ottomans. There were good reasons to believe that the two religions could establish a common political cause against what they both regarded as the imperial aggression of the Spanish Habsburg king Philip II. Walsingham was particularly attracted to the Ottomans' wooing of Protestants by stressing the commonalities between their faith and that of Islam.

In an extraordinary letter written by the Ottoman Chancery in 1574 and addressed to "the members of the Lutheran sect in Flanders and Spain", the reformers were praised because they did "not worship idols", and had "banished the idols and portraits, and bells from churches, and declared your faith by stating that God Almighty is One and Holy Jesus is His Prophet and Servant, and

"Elizabeth believed that Protestants and Muslims could establish a common cause against Catholic Spain's aggression"

now, with heart and soul, are seeking and desirous of the true faith; but the faithless one they call Papa [the pope] does not recognise his Creator as One, ascribing divinity to Holy Jesus (upon him be peace!), and worshipping idols and pictures which he has made with his own hands, thus casting doubt upon the Oneness of God and instigating how many servants of God to that path of error".

Obviously such claims were driven as much by shrewd realpolitik as belief in a commonality between the two religions, but they enabled a remarkable flourishing of Anglo-Ottoman commercial and political relations over the next two decades.

Ambassador to the Ottomans

In 1578 the Norfolk-born factor William Harborne was sent to the Ottoman capital of Constantinople with precise instructions to establish diplomatic relations with the court of Sultan Murad III. The resident Catholic Spanish, French and Venetian ambassadors were appalled at the arrival of a Protestant interloper like Harborne, openly flouting the papal injunction against trading with Islamic 'infidels'. The Spanish ambassador Bernardino de Mendoza complained bitterly that "the Turks are also desirous of friendship with the English on account of the tin which has been sent thither for the last few years, and which is of the greatest value to them, as they cannot cast their guns without it, while the English make a tremendous profit on the article, by means of which alone they maintain the trade with the Levant".

Over the next 10 years Harborne established himself as what the Ottoman court called the 'Lutheran ambassador' to Murad. He negotiated England's first ever trade agreement with a Muslim power, established a string of English trading posts throughout the Mediterranean and encouraged the Ottomans to attack the Spanish navy to forestall the sailing of Philip II's Armada in 1588.

The venture was so successful that in 1581 Elizabeth granted a charter to the newly created Turkey Company, with Harborne as its formal representative and England's first ambassador to the Ottomans. He oversaw a

Istanbul bazaar
 Merchants in
 Constantinople
 c1580, when England
 was establishing a
 string of lucrative
 trading posts across
 the Muslim world



burgeoning trade in English tin, lead (stripped from deconsecrated English churches) and wool. He negotiated the release of hundreds of English men and women captured by pirates and slavers, all while acting as Walsingham's loyal spy. He was also the intermediary in the first formal exchanges of letters between an English monarch and an Ottoman sultan.

In the spring of 1579 Murad sent letters addressed to "most renowned Elizabeth, most sacred queen, and noble prince of the most mighty worshippers of Jesus, most wise governor of the causes and affairs of the people and family of Nazareth". Elizabeth responded with equal flattery, dispatching a letter from "the most invincible and most mighty defender of the Christian faith against all kind of idolatries, of all that live among the Christians, and falsely profess the name of Christ, unto the most imperial and most invincible prince, Zuldán Murad Chan [Murad III], the most mighty ruler of the kingdom of Turkey". Both rulers saw the strategic benefits of celebrating the shared tenets of their faith in contrast to the 'idolatry' of Catholic rites and intercession, even though their ends were more pragmatic and political.

"The profits on some voyages were estimated at £70,000, producing returns of 300 per cent"

Sultan Murad III and Elizabeth exchanged flattering letters at the height of their commercial alliance



Trading expands

At the height of Harborne's embassy the Turkey Company was dispatching 19 ships weighing 100–300 tonnes and crewed by nearly 800 seamen on an average of five voyages a year to trade in 10 Ottoman-controlled Mediterranean ports. The profits on some voyages were estimated at over £70,000, producing returns of nearly 300 per cent. Unsurprisingly, Elizabeth was encouraged to grant another royal charter in 1585, this time creating the Barbary Company, importing Moroccan saltpetre, almonds, gold and sugar.

By the 1590s prosperous Elizabethans were able to consume the fruits of the Anglo-Islamic trade, from pearls, diamonds, sapphires, silks, brocades and damasks to rugs, carpets, embroideries and even Iznik pottery made in Bursa in Turkey. The importation of cotton wool from Turkish merchants stimulated Lancashire's textile industry, and the manufacture of Iranian raw silk provided employment for hundreds of workers who produced clothes 'in the Turkish manner' and household furnishings. The Turkey and Barbary imports enabled



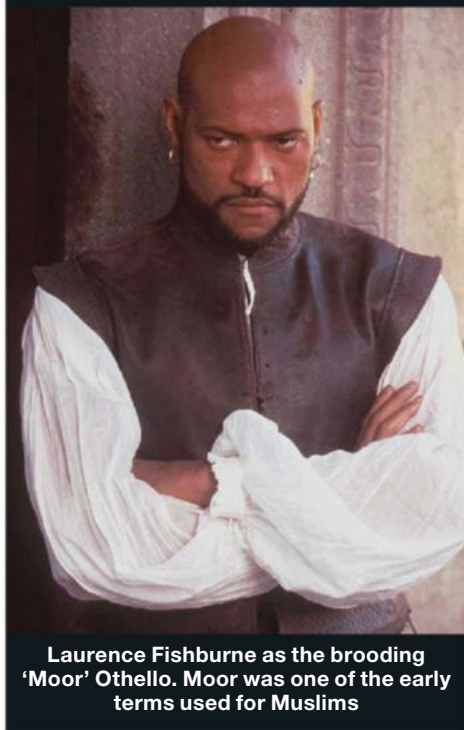
The Islamic World in 1550 By the mid-16th century, vast swathes of Europe, north Africa and Asia had been swallowed up by the irresistible rise of Muslim power, as our map shows

Muslim stars of Shakespeare's plays

By the 1580s, Elizabeth's amicable relations with the Islamic world had drawn the attention of dramatists like Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare. Plays featuring Turks and Moors became a fashion. Between 1576 and 1603 there were more than 60 with Muslim characters, although 'Muslim' only entered the language in 1615; before then 'Mahometans', 'Ottomites', 'Saracens', 'Moors', 'Pagans' or 'Turks' were used interchangeably to describe Muslims.

Shakespeare's plays are full of references to Moors and Turks. In 1592 his first history play, *Henry VI, Part 1*, mentions 'Mahomet' (Muhammad), followed two years later by the villainous Aaron the Moor in the revenge tragedy *Titus Andronicus*. He put a different Moor onstage in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596): the Prince of Morocco, who tries unsuccessfully to woo the heroine Portia.

Shakespeare's interest in such characters culminates in *Othello* (c1600–03), subtitled 'The Moor of Venice'. Othello is a notoriously ambiguous figure, subject to racial slurs but also admired as a Moor who has converted to Christianity (though from what we are never told) and whose marriage to the Venetian noblewoman Desdemona is destroyed by his jealous lieutenant Iago, whose name in Spanish is Santiago, or Matamoros – the Moor killer.



Laurence Fishburne as the brooding 'Moor' Othello. Moor was one of the early terms used for Muslims

"The Tudors were changed by their encounter with Islam, in the trade they practised, the diplomacy they pursued and the clothes they wore"

Elizabethans to wear silk and cotton, drink sweet wines and consume aniseed, nutmeg, mace, turmeric and pistachios. The demand for currants alone from Ottoman-controlled Greek islands was so great that at the height of Elizabeth's reign 2,300 tonnes were being imported annually.

Slowly but surely the Tudors were changed by their encounter with Islam, in the trade they practised, the diplomacy they pursued, the clothes they wore and the things they ate.

Yet with Elizabeth's death in 1603, James VI and I's accession and peace with Spain in 1604, the need for an anti-Spanish Anglo-Islamic alliance collapsed. Over the subsequent centuries, academic 'orientalism' denigrated Islamic societies as decadent, despotic and backward, a myth reinforced by the ideology of British imperial rule over Islamic communities across the Middle East and east Asia. It is only in recent years – with the rise of religious fundamentalism, the infamous 'war on terror' and 'clash of civilisation' thesis – that the long and fraught history of Christian and Islamic encounters are being re-examined to find some response to the conflicts currently raging in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and even on the streets of Paris, London and Madrid.

Elizabeth's reign saw a brief and extremely strategic flowering of a rapprochement with the Islamic world and, although it was confused and misunderstood, it was a time at which those on both sides of the theological divide put aside faith to try to find ways of accommodating each other's differences.

A truly multicultural approach to world history should acknowledge that Tudor England was not insular and parochial but outward-looking and international, and that relations with the Muslim world were an important part of its story. If we want to understand the role played by many different faiths in this island's history, from Christians and Jews to British Muslims, then it is a story we need to acknowledge now more than ever before. ■



Changing tastes Nutmeg, currants and ornate Turkish fabric, all highly prized commodities embraced by prosperous Elizabethans as a result of the new trade

Jerry Brotton is professor of renaissance studies at Queen Mary University of London

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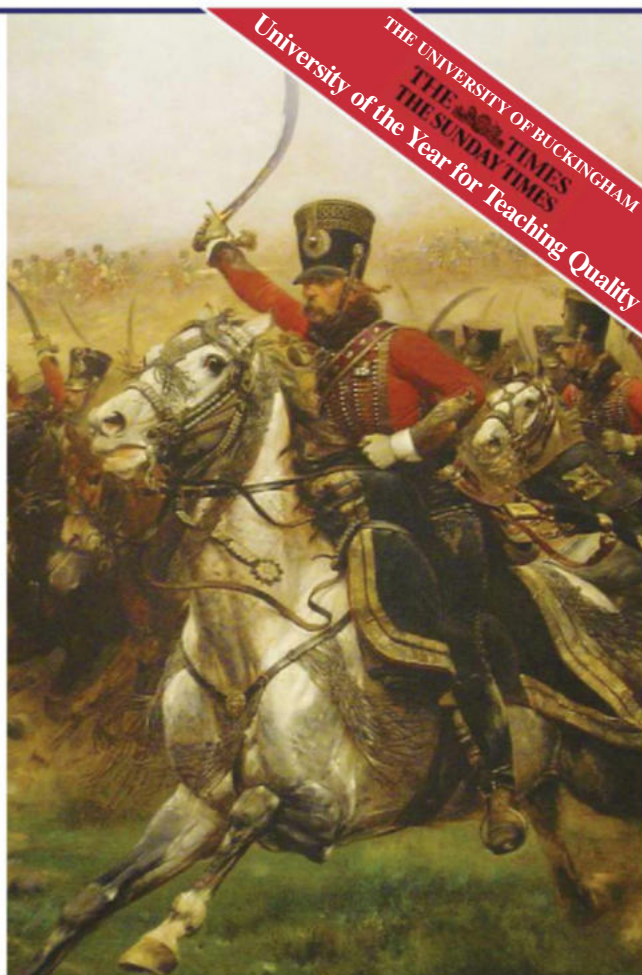
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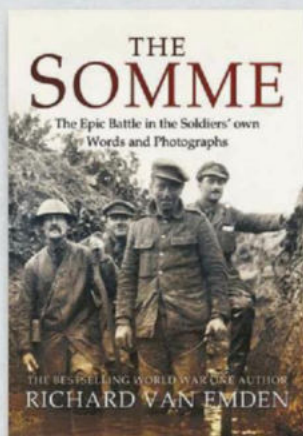


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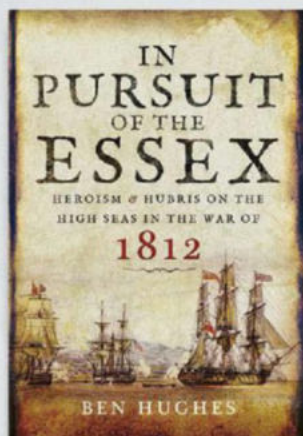
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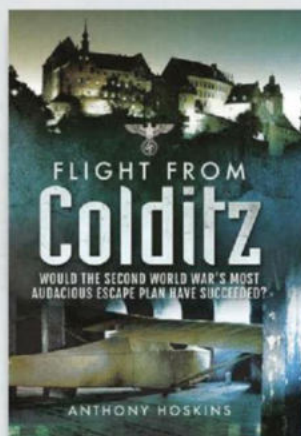
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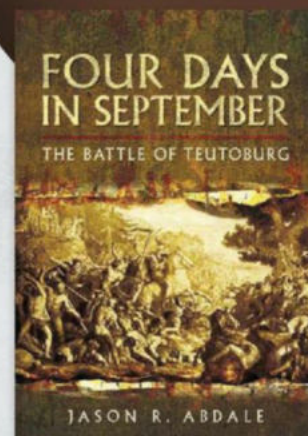
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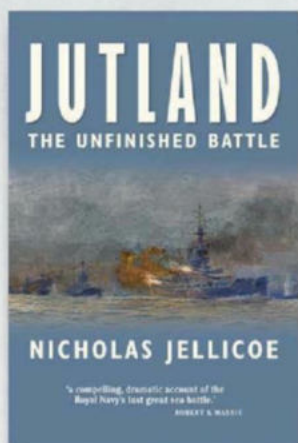
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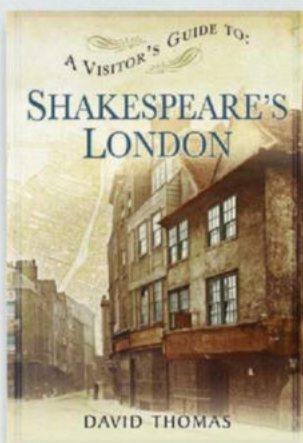
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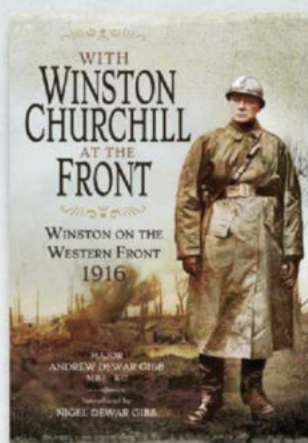
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THE TUDOR SEX GUIDE

At the dawn of Henry VIII's reign, the church, the crown and medics each had views on acceptable forms of romantic activity. **Lauren Johnson** offers eight tips on navigating the Tudor period's sexual minefield

An oil on panel painting of an amorous couple in the early 16th century. Throughout the Tudor period, such romantic encounters were governed by strict rules and conventions



PUBLIC DOMAIN

1 Don't have sex on Wednesdays

The church had such strict rules about when, where and how people could have sex that, at first glance, it appears sexual activity was almost totally forbidden. Sex was not allowed on Wednesdays, Fridays or Sundays; throughout Lent, Advent and Pentecost; before major holy days; when a woman was menstruating, confined before pregnancy, for a month after childbirth and while she was breast-feeding; three days before taking communion; during daylight hours; naked; or in any position other than missionary.

In fact, any sexual act going against the 'natural order' – that is, for procreation – was legally classed as 'sodomy'. This meant that a range of activity, from the lesser sins of wet dreams, masturbation and oral sex, through to the 'abominable vices' of incest, bestiality and homosexual acts, was condemned.

2 Only have sex within marriage

The only sexual activity permitted by the church was payment of your 'marriage debt': marital sex to produce a child. But the church had not altogether taken control of the ceremony of marriage – all that was required for a 'wedding' in 1509 was an exchange of vows between a man and woman in front of a witness, followed by consummation. One 15th-century couple got married by Beverley Gate in Hull while milking a cow. This rather nebulous arrangement sometimes led to unions later being rejected by one or other party, transforming legitimate payment of the marriage debt into illicit fornication.

Henry VIII's friend Charles Brandon had a spectacularly unscrupulous track record on this score. He first 'married' the young gentlewoman Anne Browne in a ceremony dubious enough for him to repudiate her after she gave birth to his daughter. He then remarried Anne's aunt, who was 20 years his senior, and spent two years stripping as much of the wealth from her estate as possible before annulling the union and taking up with Anne again. All legally acceptable.



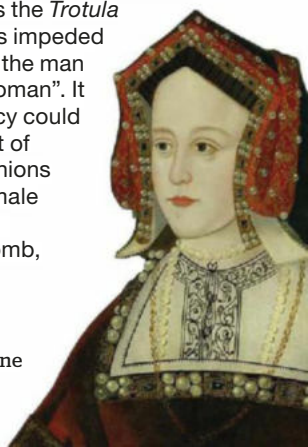
3 Go forth and multiply (especially if you're a king...)

For kings and queens, reproduction was seen not only as a moral duty but also as a dynastic imperative. Henry VIII knew how fragile this situation could be. His own mother, Elizabeth of York, had eight children (the last childbirth killed her) but only three of them were still alive in 1509. Henry himself was the sole surviving son. It was essential for the survival of the Tudor line that he and his new bride Catherine of Aragon (pictured right) produce a child – ideally a boy.

Unfortunately, all did not go well in the first few years of marriage. Catherine miscarried a daughter in January 1510 and had a hysterical pregnancy from which she emerged shame-faced in May 1510. A Prince of Wales born to her at New Year 1511 was dead within two months. Before

Catherine and Henry's first anniversary the royal councillors were already muttering darkly about the queen's infertility – her own ambassador criticised her excessive fasting for causing irregular **menstruation**.

In cases of infertility women traditionally got the blame, but the enormously popular **medical texts** known as the *Trotula* held that "conception is impeded as much by the fault of the man as by the fault of the woman". It suggested male potency could be remedied with a diet of **generative foods** like onions and parsnips, while female infertility, caused by an **over-dry or slippery** womb, required pessaries or fumigants.



BRIDGEMAN/TOPEFOTO



A brothel scene c1550, when the medical community believed regular sex was essential to health. Brothels were seen as a necessary evil in order to keep men from satisfying their lusts in transgressive ways

5 ...but not too much!

The church was so prohibitive in its attitude towards sex because it feared that, even when undertaking sex for procreative or medical reasons, people still might enjoy it so much that they would be lured into vice. The 15th-century mystic Margery Kempe was so disturbed by the pleasure she took in her marital sex that she asked her husband to live chastely. She feared that they “had displeased God by their inordinate love and the great delectation they each had in using the other”.

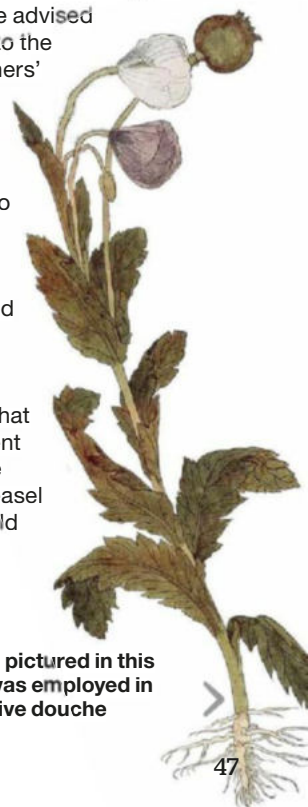
To some thinkers, any sex at all was too much. The ancient philosopher Aristotle had warned that sex weakened the mind of reason, and John Fisher, bishop of Rochester in 1509, claimed that “filthy lust of the flesh” could be actively harmful to men: “Physicians say that a man taketh more hurt by the effusion of a little seed than by shedding of 10 times so much blood.”

6 Don't use contraception

Contraception was condemned by the church and exception could only be made in rare cases when a woman's life would be endangered by childbirth. Priestly manuals called penitentials were particularly anxious about the widespread use of *coitus interruptus*. Ministers were advised not to inquire too much into the specifics of their parishioners' sex lives – ignorance was, it seems, bliss.

The contraceptive advice handed out by medical texts is at times so bizarre that it is hard to imagine anyone taking it in any case. One douche to inhibit fertility demanded opium poppy, egg whites, goose fat, honey and “the milk of a woman”.

The *Trotula* suggested that a woman could also prevent pregnancy by carrying the testicles of a castrated weasel in her bosom – which would certainly kill the mood.



The opium poppy, pictured in this 1542 engraving, was employed in a contraceptive douche

4 Enjoy yourself...

The medical world had a different attitude to sex. Following the highly influential writings of the ancient Greeks Hippocrates and Galen, physicians believed too little sex could be bad for your health, and even endanger those around you. According to them, both sexes produced ‘seed’, the means by which new life was created, and good health required maintaining a balance of this in the body. If a man did not vent his seed he could be driven to depraved acts of sexual transgression: incest, bestiality and rape.

On the continent, cities such as Florence licensed brothels specifically to prevent men turning to homosexual acts to vent their seed. For women, “retention of seed” could lead to convulsions, fainting spells, breathing difficulty and even madness. The

solution? “If the suffocation comes from a retention of the sperm,” wrote the 14th-century physician John of Gaddesden, “the woman should get together and draw up a marriage contract with some man.” So the cure was sex. This dual-seed theory meant that to make a child both couples must vent their seed – that is, orgasm.

In the 11th century, Muslim polymath Avicenna had written advice for men so they could spot the signs of approaching female orgasm, and, translated into Latin, his works proliferated in the 15th and early 16th centuries. If this sounds a little too good to be true, it probably is. As far as medical thought went, virtually any vaginal emission counted as seed, so while it might be good for a woman's health to have sex, the onus still wasn't really on her pleasure.

7 Use prostitutes

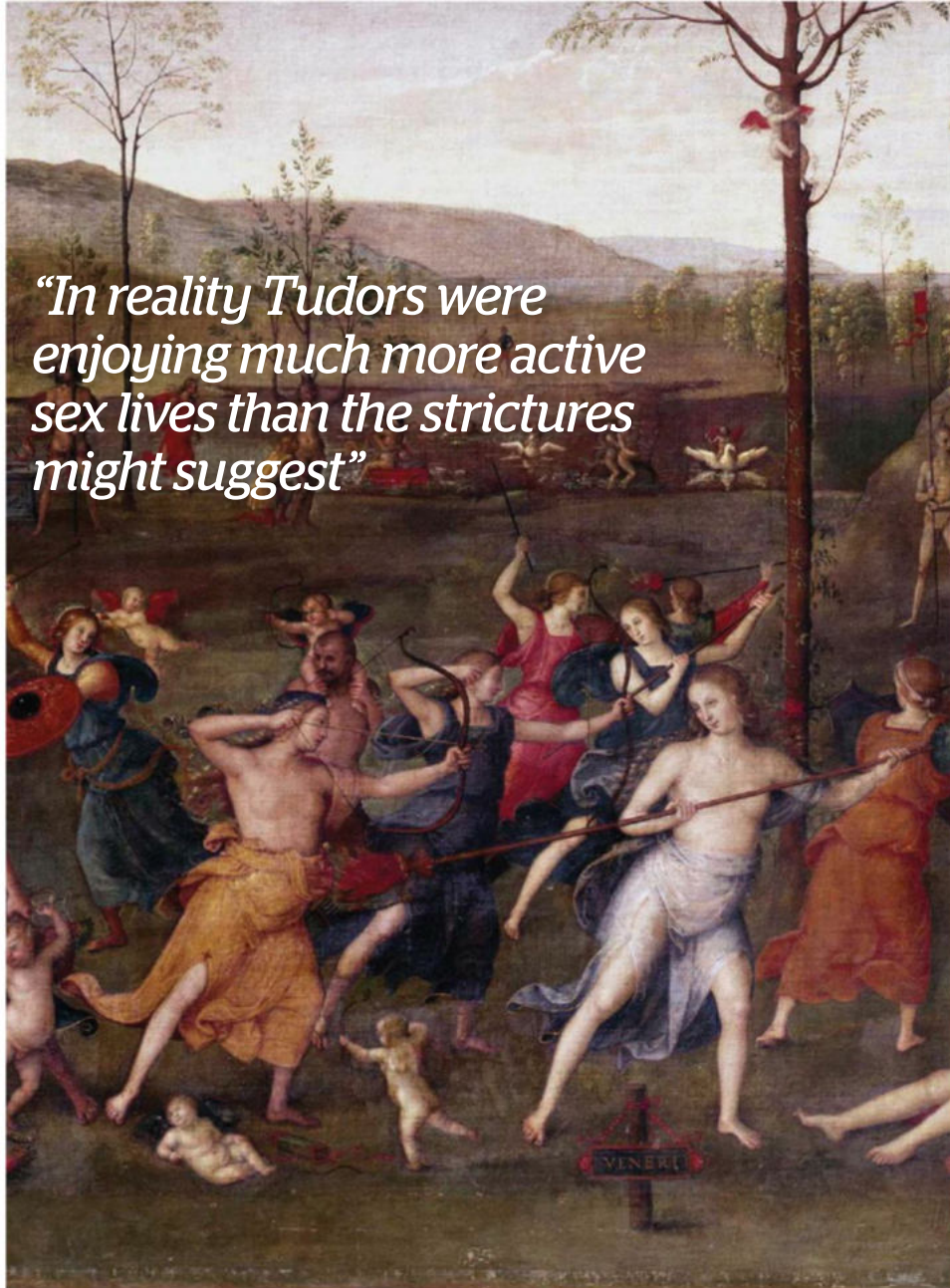
Surprisingly, one of the sexual transgressions that the church winked at was prostitution. The fifth-century theologian St Augustine had argued that if a man was going to have sex for non-procreative reasons it was better to do so with a prostitute, who was already corrupted, than with his wife. Some towns officially sanctioned prostitution. In Southampton, Bawd of the Stews (a brothel-owner or pimp) was an official title. The city of Sandwich regulated “a house... for common women” where prostitutes plied their trade. Southwark, outside London, was a 16th-century red light district and its landlord, the bishop of Winchester, personally owned two of the dozen brothels in the area.

Even where towns punished prostitution, their clamp-downs seem to have been more financially than morally motivated. Fining prostitutes for failing to wear a mandatory striped hood to distinguish them from respectable citizens was a money spinner for local authorities. The fact the same names and locations appear repeatedly in the records suggests that either officials were bad at their jobs, or that efforts to curb prostitution were only ever half-hearted. Alice Dymmok of Great Yarmouth, for example, had near constant run-ins with authorities throughout Henry VII's reign for everything from prostitution to keeping a “suspicious house”.

A prostitute and client, seen in a c1500 woodcut. The Tudor church often turned a blind eye to the ‘oldest profession’



“In reality Tudors were enjoying much more active sex lives than the strictures might suggest”



A 16th-century painting, *The Battle of Love and Chastity*, seems to illustrate the conflict between romance and regulation – but for many people the rules were there to be broken

8 Ignore all the rules

Given how contradictory medical texts and church advice could be, it is hardly surprising that in reality Tudors enjoyed much more active sex lives than these strictures might suggest.

Court records reveal couples having sex on shop floors, on haystacks, in kitchens, back alleys and up against walls. One pair were even discovered “in a pit” beside St George's Field in London. Adultery might be forbidden but there was plenty of it going on, which is perhaps unsurprising when arranged marriages were commonplace among the nobility

and royalty. While Catherine of Aragon was confined for her first pregnancy, Henry VIII and his close friend William Compton were both romantically linked to the married Lady Anne Hastings. Compton's relationship with Anne remained so devoted that he left her some of his estate in his will of 1523 – but that didn't stop him requesting burial alongside his wife.

The Spanish ambassador who reported the king's dalliance did not condemn him, but instead Queen Catherine – for being “vexed” by the affair. “In this I think I understand my part,” he wrote, “being a married man,

and having often treated with married people in similar matters.” Given that you were damned if you did and damned if you didn't, many Tudors clearly found that sex was worth the risk. **III**

Lauren Johnson is an author and historian whose books include *The Arrow of Sherwood* (Pen & Sword Fiction, 2013)

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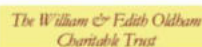


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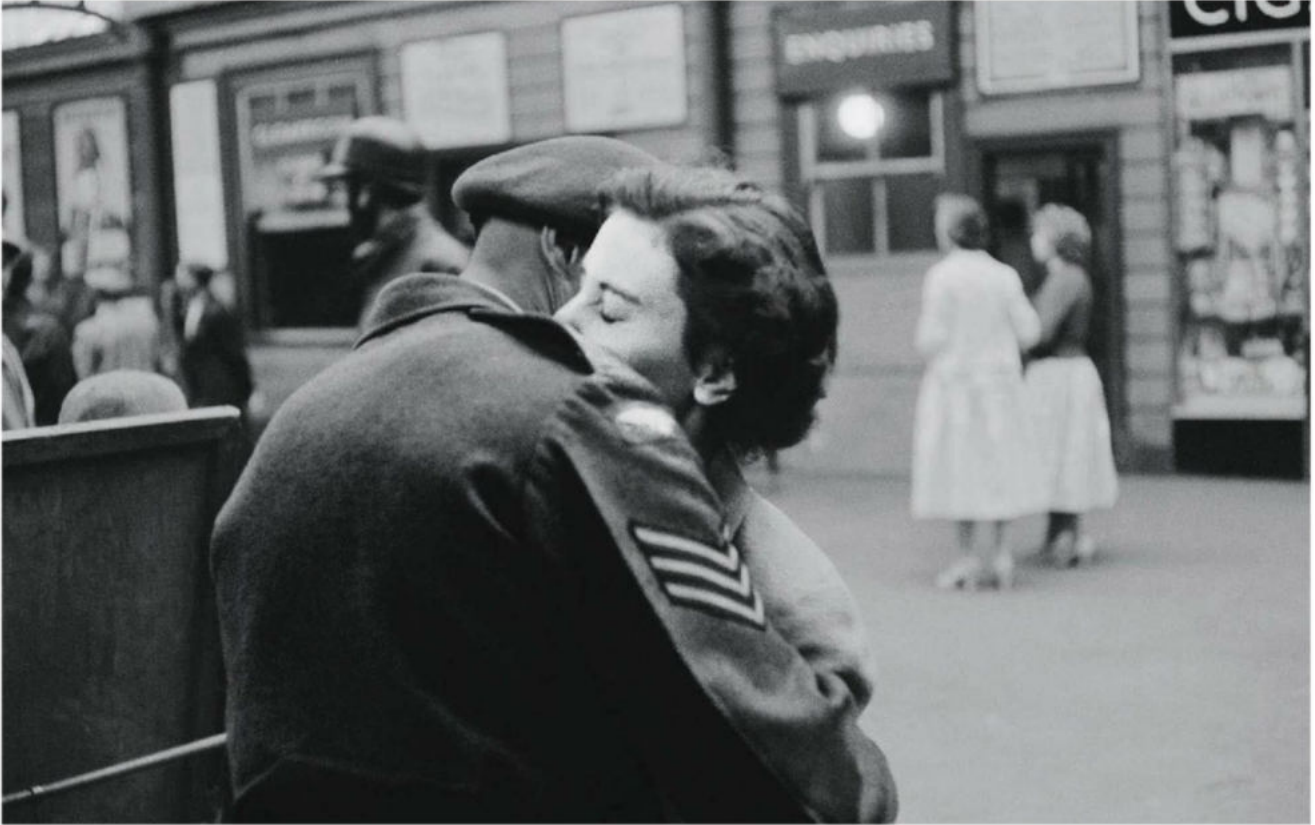
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THE **HISTORY** ESSAY



A soldier says his goodbyes before leaving for Egypt during the Suez Crisis of 1956. Great impersonal forces such as wars and social change may be history's engines but personal experiences are what really bring the past to life, says Margaret MacMillan

HOW PEOPLE MAKE THE PAST

The great currents of history are important, but it's
the individuals whose stories fascinate us most

By Margaret MacMillan

Let me start with two very different stories in two very different parts of the past. In the 1790s, a young woman called Elizabeth Simcoe walked in the twilight through a forest in Upper Canada, a scarcely settled part of the British empire. A fire had recently swept through and its smoke still lingered.

Every so often, one of the smouldering trees shot out a tongue of flame. It was, she reported, “a little like Tasso’s enchanted wood”. In her copious journals, written for those she had left behind in England, we share her surprise and delight at the new world in which she found herself. Some three centuries earlier, Babur, a prince from central Asia, also decided to set down his thoughts and experiences in a journal, which somehow survived his turbulent and adventurous life. And so we can read about Babur’s complicated feelings when he first fell in love but was tongue-tied every time he encountered his adored one. We can sympathise as he gets discouraged in his quest for a kingdom of his own and muses on whether he should simply give up and go and wander around China.

Babur is famous in history as the founder of the Mughal dynasty which ruled over much of India from 1526 to 1858. Mrs Simcoe has been known only to a few specialists in Canadian history. Yet they are both history’s people, part of that long cavalcade of the renowned and the obscure, whose separate stories feed into and enrich history. I was drawn to them, as I have been to other individuals, partly because they wrote such vivid memoirs, but also because they each in their own way were part of great historical trends. He was part of that restless movement of peoples out of central Asia which helped to create new empires from Persia to China, while she was a part of the imperial edifices that the European powers were building around the world in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The past is a far-off country, but voices such as theirs bring it closer to us. Their lives, like ours, were shaped by the great currents that run through history: economic and social changes, the spread of new ideas or technologies. Yet they were also individuals like us, with loves and hates, fears and hopes, biases and beliefs. And some of them, like Babur, changed the course of events. I must confess, as an inveterate gossip, I love their stories. They are also the stuff of the history I write. As a historian I need to know about both individuals and their times and how they interacted. I have found that the best way to draw students and readers into an understanding and enthusiasm for history is to tell them about people. I can explain the strategies and tactics of the First World War, for example, but it is

when I describe the experiences of a young man who went into the army, or of the woman he left behind, that I help my listeners and readers see what that war meant for millions of lives.

The letters, diaries and memoirs which the past has bequeathed the present are an unending source of entertainment, enlightenment and edification. They can take us into worlds unlike our own and make us acquainted with people who may have very different values and attitudes. Today, for example, we tend to look at politicians with suspicion and wonder why anyone would choose to enter such a suspect profession. For young men of good families in ancient Rome, however, politics was the noblest of careers, but personal ambition for its own sake was despised. For inhabitants of the Byzantine world, what was seen was only part of reality. The invisible world, with its gods and spirits, was equally important and the Byzantines spent much thought and energy on placating or tricking the denizens of that other world. The Prussian Junker class, made up of sober country squires who believed in serving God and their king, has vanished, but we can learn something of its values when we read the memoirs of Countess Marion Dönhoff or Libussa Fritz-Krockow, people who grew up just as a way of life that had lasted for centuries was about to be swept away by the Nazis and the Second World War.

Yet we also have moments when we recognise that here is another human being sounding very like we might sound ourselves. We know what Samuel Pepys in 17th-century London is feeling when he complains about his wife’s boring friends who always seem to be hanging about just when he wants a quiet evening at home. When the 17th-century wit and woman of letters Madame de Sevigné writes to her beloved daughter about how much she misses her, we can share her pain. In the essays of Michel de Montaigne, the nobleman who retired to his estates in France’s troubled 16th century, we encounter his search to understand human nature. The questions he poses are ones we might well ask ourselves. Why is it that our minds wander? Why do we find certain people beautiful and not others? What, if anything, happens to our souls when we die?

We all love stories, and I think I first became interested in history through the ones my parents and grandparents told me about



Diaryists such as Elizabeth Simcoe (1762–1850) give us a unique window on history



A scene from Babur's memoirs shows him at the spring of Khawaja Sih Yaran. As the first Mughal emperor, Babur changed the course of history. Yet, says Margaret MacMillan, he was an individual like us, "with loves and hates, fears and hopes, biases and beliefs"

THE HISTORY ESSAY

“We are all products of our own societies: we take on their values and assumptions, often without realising. If we have opportunities, those come because the times allow for them”



Marion Dönhoff pictured (far right) during a visit by Paul von Hindenburg to her family home, Friedrichstein Castle. Her memoirs give us a fascinating insight into the world of the Prussian Junker class before it was atomised in the 1930s and 1940s

their own lives. And then there were books for children: historical novels by Geoffrey Trease or Rosemary Sutcliffe and carefully sanitised versions of *The Arabian Nights* or *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table*. As I grew older, I learned that history is more than a collection of stories about individuals. It is about economic, social or ideological forces and the great changes they bring, such as the industrial and scientific revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, or the spread of liberal democracy and the rise of its totalitarian opponents.

So we need to ask how did Mrs Simcoe, an heiress from England, find herself quoting an Italian Renaissance poet in one of the British empire's newer colonies? Or why was Babur drawn to conquer India and what made him succeed? What were the currents that swept them along? Without the great expansion of European empires there would have been no Upper Canada for Mrs Simcoe's husband to rule. Babur could not have taken India if its rulers had not been pitted against each other. We are all products of our own societies: we take

on their values and assumptions, often without realising it. If we have opportunities, those come because the times allow for them. Think of all the women in history who did not get the same educations or chances in life as their brothers. Napoleon was a man of many and extraordinary talents. Yet, as someone from a modest family in the backwater of Corsica, he would not have been able to exercise those if the French Revolution had not swept away much of the old order.

Napoleon did not just fall through an open door into a position of power. He stormed through it and made himself the master of France and then Europe. We have to ask if there was anyone else in France who could have done it, which is not the same as going back to what EH Carr, the distinguished British historian, called the 'Bad King John' approach to history – the view, as he put it, “that what matters in history is the character and behaviour of individuals”.

It does, however, seem legitimate to ask what would have happened if certain individuals had never lived. Would socialist thinking in the

ARKG IMAGES

“If Winston Churchill had died when he was knocked down by a car in New York in 1931, would any other British politician have resolved to stand up to Hitler?”

19th century have been the same without Karl Marx? There were many variants of socialism, but through his work and his powerful intellect he created a theory so all-encompassing that it influenced politics for the next century. Or what road would Germany have followed if Hitler had been killed, as he nearly was, in the First World War? Other radical nationalist leaders shared his racism and his ambition to dominate Europe, but it is hard to imagine that Goebbels or Goering could have mesmerised the German people as Hitler did, or would have been prepared to see the German nation perish rather than surrender. In Soviet Russia, the Bolshevik leadership believed that collectivisation of the farms was the necessary first step towards industrialisation, yet it took Stalin to force it. If Winston Churchill had died when he was knocked down by a car on Fifth Avenue in New York in 1931, he could not have become prime minister in the spring of 1940, the darkest days of the Second World War. Would any other leading British politician – Neville Chamberlain, for example – have determined that Britain must not attempt to make peace with Hitler’s Germany, that it must fight on, even in the face of likely defeat? It is hard to imagine anyone other than Churchill taking that stand.

Sometimes the character of the man or woman in power really does matter. As the crisis of 1914 reached its culmination in late July, two men could have stopped the slide to war: Nicholas II of Russia and Wilhelm II of Germany. Each had to sign the order for his country’s general mobilisation; each hesitated in the hopes of maintaining the peace; and each gave way to pressure from his advisers (both were afraid of appearing weak).

President John F Kennedy faced similar pressures in the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. Many of his top military advisers told him that he had to get tough with the Soviets and demand the removal of their forces from Cuba, even at the risk of nuclear war. Kennedy opted for a combination of blockade and negotiation. Perhaps it helped that he had just read Barbara Tuchman’s history of how Europe blundered into the First World War. Individuals are swept along for the most part by the currents of history, but we need to be aware that sometimes there are those who ride and steer those currents and, occasionally, turn them in another direction altogether.

In every society there are some who are more daring, ambitious or simply more restless than the rest of us. Such people will go up in balloons, climb unconquered peaks just because they are there, or go into space even though they know that they are risking their lives. In the great age of exploration, they set off in tiny ships across uncharted waters or walked across unmapped continents. Entrepreneurs and inventors, Henry Ford, Thomas Edison or Steve Jobs, will persist in the face of failure. Martin Luther defied the might of the Catholic church and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn the Soviet government.

Richard Nixon’s time as president will always be marked by Watergate, the scandal that destroyed him,

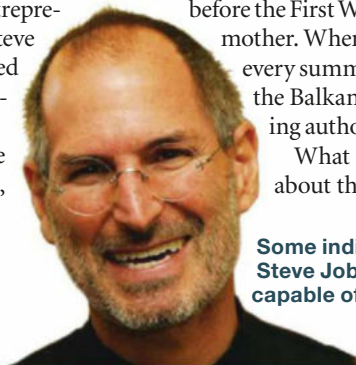


A historic handshake: would the Sino-American rapprochement of 1972 have happened if Richard Nixon hadn’t been president?

when he used the powers of his office against his opponents. Yet he was also a statesman who took a risk in re-establishing American relations with China. At a time when anti-communist feeling still ran deep in the United States and memories of American troops fighting Chinese ones in the Korean War were still vivid, he took a considerable political gamble when he went to Beijing. His trip paid off, not right away perhaps, but in the longer run. Not only did Nixon’s opening of relations with China put the United States back in the centre of world affairs, but it made possible a more stable Asia. It helped that, on the Chinese side, Mao Zedong had also decided that China needed the United States as a friend. The two countries had strong reasons for coming together, but it took Nixon and Mao to make it happen.

Still other personalities in history stand out for me simply because of who they were. They might be witty and amusing like the Duc of Saint-Simon at the court of Louis XIV, who noted down all the court gossip and the damning details about the king, whom he greatly disliked. Perhaps, like Madame de la Tour du Pin in the French Revolution, they encountered adversity bravely. She went from being a privileged member of the French court to living on a farm in New York state. Others still set out on improbable adventures, stepping out boldly in the face of obstacles and minefields. Edith Durham, from a prosperous upper-middle-class family in London before the First World War, was miserable looking after an invalid mother. When the doctor advised that she take some holidays every summer, Durham chose to explore the wilder parts of the Balkans, often on her own. In time she became a leading authority on Albania.

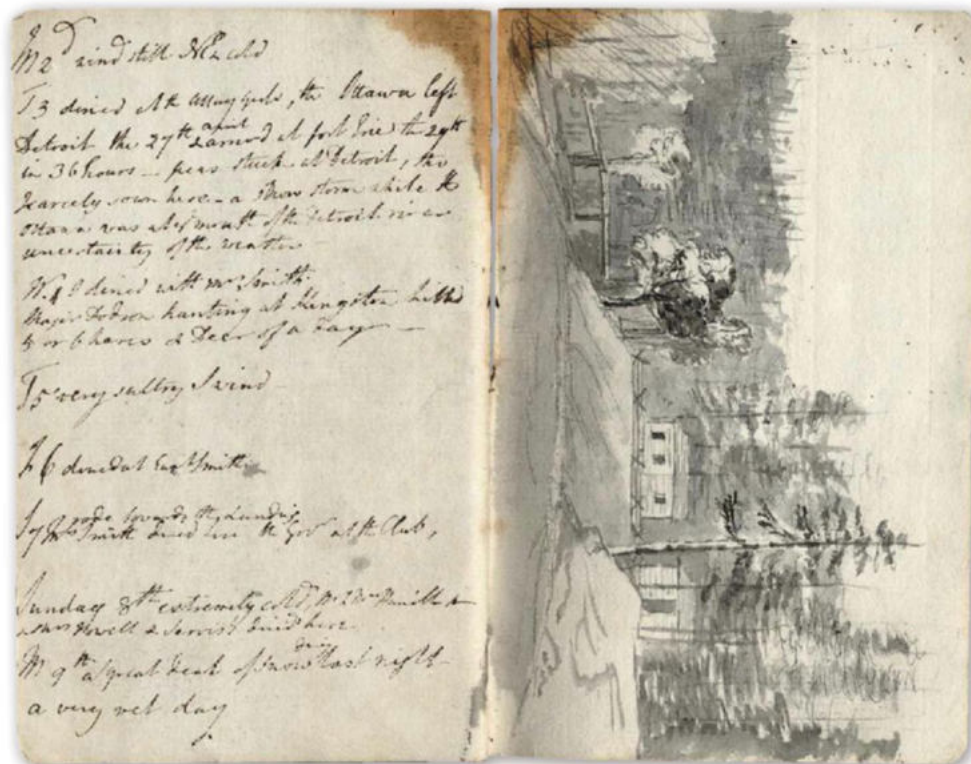
What all such people have in common is curiosity, about the peoples and places they encounter. When Ba-



Some individuals, like former Apple CEO Steve Jobs in the field of technology, are capable of changing the course of history

THE HISTORY ESSAY

“We should not ignore those individual voices from the past. They remind us both of our common humanity and of the differences among us”



Pages from Elizabeth Simcoe's diaries. Her curiosity about the world around her is evident in her observations on everything from Niagara Falls to Native Americans

bur conquered India, he wrote copiously about the land (which he found flat and ugly compared to his beloved mountains), its flora and fauna. He liked the hibiscus and oleanders, and what to him were the strange and different customs of its people. Mrs Simcoe sketched and described everything she came across, from Niagara Falls to Native Americans.

Without such acute observers history would be much the poorer. We know a great deal about Nazi Germany, thanks in part to the records the Nazis themselves kept, but without Victor Klemperer we would not know firsthand what it was like to be a Jew there. Because he was married to what the Nazis classified as an 'Aryan', he was spared deportation and death in the camps to the east. He kept a diary, a brave act in itself, which shows, hideous detail by detail, how the regime tightened its grip and systematically excluded German Jews from society throughout the 1930s. Klemperer and his wife chose not to emigrate and when war came they no longer had the choice. We see through the diaries Klemperer's gradual realisation that Europe's Jews are being exterminated and we wait with him for the war to end.

History is always changing. We find new documents and artefacts. We bring in new insights from other fields such as biology, anthropology or archeology. And we ask new questions because of what preoccupies us. Climate history, for example, is a new and exciting field. Yet we should not ignore those individual voices from the past. They remind us both of our common humanity and of the differences among us. Above all, they bring history to life and help us to understand why it is important – and show us that it can be fun too. ■

Margaret MacMillan is a professor of international history at the University of Oxford. She is the author of numerous award-winning books, including the acclaimed *The War That Ended Peace* (Profile, 2013), and is a frequent contributor to TV and radio programmes

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OUR FIRST WORLD WAR

A total war

In part 22 of his personal testimony series, **Peter Hart** takes us to March 1916, when Britons carried the fight to the Germans by land, sea and air – as well as on the home front. Peter will be tracing the experiences of 20 people who lived through the First World War – via interviews, letters and diary entries – as its centenary progresses

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES ALBON



George Wainford

George was born in 1897, the son of a regular soldier. He joined the Royal Navy as a boy seaman in 1912, and carried out his sea-going training aboard HMS *Crescent* in 1914.

After leaving HMS *Albemarle*, Able Seaman George Wainford was posted aboard HMS *Onslaught*. He soon found that serving on a small destroyer was a very different undertaking.

“She was brand new, she hadn’t been commissioned. The first thing was how small she was compared with the ships I’d been used to – and how cramped everything was. On a big ship your kitbag, which stood about 3ft-high, was stowed in bag racks with a name plate on the back of your bag showing.

On *Onslaught* all your gear was unpacked and put into seat lockers on which the crew sat to eat their meals! So in consequence if anybody wanted to get to their locker, nine times out of ten somebody else was sitting on it! You had to get so used to being crowded together. After a big battleship it took

a lot of getting used to!

We had to go out into the Clyde to do the acceptance trials, and one of the tables in the foc’sle had been laid out with all kinds of eatables, things you hadn’t seen for ages. This was for all the dockyard ‘high-ups’ to have a meal – beer and poultry, meats and pies – all kinds of things. We went out, right down the Clyde and into the open sea – it was filthy weather. She turned and twisted and near stood on her head! I was as sick as I could possibly be! I’d never experienced anything like it – it was terrible. I mean, people laugh at seasickness but when you are seasick, you really are!

After several hours of this, we got back and the officer said to the dockyard officials: “There’s a meal in the seaman’s quarters there for you!” Only about half a dozen at the most went – the others didn’t want to know!



Bobby West

Gabrielle ‘Bobby’ West was born in 1890, the daughter of a vicar. At the outbreak of war, she was living with her parents at Selsley in Gloucestershire. As a member of the Red Cross, she had helped in accommodating Belgian refugees and also cooked and cleaned at the Standish hospital.

In March 1916, Bobby West became the night manager at the work canteens at Woolwich Arsenal.

“Quite enjoyed myself last night in spite of being very sleepy. There is lots to do. The boys are in and out all the time, buying cakes and tea and lemonade. A big batch of girls come to dinner. As for Woolwich, it is of course a slummy part of London. But it is rather amusing for all that! Beresford Square outside the main gate is a big market full of fruit, vegetables, fish, tripe, winkles, flowers, knives and tools, livestock and all the various wares you see at Petticoat Lane. There are also street jugglers, palmists etc.

Imagine Oxford Street with no pavements and no islands, but with a railway running down each side and the road a sea of mud and rubbish, and you will have an idea of what the ‘Long Straight’ at Woolwich is like. You leap out of the way of a lorry and land under a train, bundle out from there and run full tilt into a swearing navvy who wants to know: “By all that’s holy you can’t look where you are going?”



Jack Dorgan

Northumberland-born Jack Dorgan took part in the attack on St Julien during the second battle of Ypres, in the spring of 1915. After the battle he had been promoted to sergeant.

On 24 March, Sergeant Jack Dorgan, who was still serving with the 7th Northumberland Fusiliers in the Ypres area on the western front, was sent on a ration party with Second Lieutenant Cyril Swinney.

“We could hear the shelling away up in front of us but getting nearer all the time. The officer in charge, when the German shelling was getting nearer, he ordered the men to lie alongside the embankment, face to the side. I, at the back of the party, moved up to Lieutenant Swinney and lay down beside him. The German shelling came nearer and nearer, and of all the 40 men in that party we were the only two to be wounded.

Lieutenant Swinney received some shrapnel in the back and I received a piece in the leg. The stretcher bearers came and attended to the officer and away he went. Then they attended to me – I had a big piece of shrapnel in my thigh in my left leg.

Dorgan was taken to Hospital Farm, which was being used as a first aid post. His war on the western front was over. Here he found there were several wounded awaiting treatment on stretchers. The first aid bandages were cut

off and, after a wait, the doctor arrived.

“I heard a voice say: ‘I’m the doctor, you have a piece of shrapnel in your leg!’ I said: ‘I know!’ ‘It will have to come out!’ I said: ‘I know!’ The doctor says: ‘What you don’t know is I haven’t any drugs, anything to give you to deaden the pain while I cut it out, but my instruments are all clean. We’ve had a tremendous amount of casualties today so you’ll just have to bear with it!’ I said: ‘Get on with it!’”

I’m lying face down on the stretcher. So four orderlies came – one on each arm, one on each leg – and held me down. I never felt him cut into my leg behind the knee to get the shrapnel out, but I certainly felt him getting it out. When he got a hold of it and tried to pull it out, the flesh was still sticking to the jagged edges.

Every time I wanted to shout, the fellow on my right arm just took my head and shoved my face into the stretcher. And that’s how I suffered while the doctor cut into my leg! It was months before I regained the full use of that leg.

“Every time I wanted to shout, the fellow on my right arm just took my head and shoved my face into the stretcher”



Victor Goddard

Victor was born in 1897. After attending Dartmouth College as a cadet, he served as a midshipman on HMS *Britannia* from 1914 to 1915. Following balloon training he was posted onto airships with the Royal Naval Air Service in June 1915.

Midshipman Victor Goddard had been sent as commander of an airship to patrol the English Channel from his base at Capel le Ferne. Goddard was still inexperienced as an airship pilot but in his own mind was confident that he was up to the task.

“You must remember that I had had a lot of experience in handling ships of various kinds – admittedly small ones. I’d been in the navy for seven years, since the age of 12½. I’d been on the bridge of a destroyer and captain of a picket-boat. Bringing an airship to a landing party is very similar to handling a ship in the water and coming alongside a jetty. To me – and to everybody else in the navy – an airship was just a ship which happened to be flying in the air instead of swimming in the water.

The airship car was just a normal BE2c aircraft fuselage hung beneath the capacious blimp gasbag.

“The pilot – he liked to be dignified by the name of captain of the aircraft – was a midshipman. His wireless operator, the only other member of the crew, was really also an observer. He was expected to keep his eyes skinned, report what he saw on the surface and to assist in spotting submarines – which was our main function. I’m not certain that there was any great knowledge about the pattern in which the German submarines operated.

One would be detailed for normally an eight-hour patrol. That meant crossing over the Channel, perhaps several times, or just going to a patrol area, and going round and round in that

area. One would take up one’s lunch or some sandwiches to sustain you – probably a thermos-flask or two – and you would ensure that your wireless operator had his food with him! You’d just set a course and, having calculated the wind, would steer off this.

The visibility might be pretty poor. Sometimes you wouldn’t know for certain where you were, because nothing whatever would be in sight. We never saw a submarine, except sometimes our own. We had very loose instructions – all we were there to do was to attack submarines. But in fact I knew that we could not attack a submarine!

We had a bomb-rack to carry eight 20-pound bombs. But by the time I had got to Capel, one or two of our own submarines had been accidentally bombed, and this caused the Admiralty to decide that nothing in the air should be given such lethal weapons. We carried dummy bombs after that, so that anybody reporting us would say: “Well, that airship went away carrying a lot of bombs!”

We could only report a submarine’s presence, its course, estimated speed, and then shadow it until destroyers should arrive to attack it with depth charges. But in fact, of course, it would see us long before we would see it. **H**

Peter Hart is the oral historian at the Imperial War Museum. His books include *The Great War: 1914–1918* (Profile Books, 2013)

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An Indian soldier serving with the British Army is stretched to hospital in c1916

GETTY IMAGES/PICTURE CONSULTANT: EVERETT SHARP

NEXT ISSUE: “The Zep was about three miles up like a sausage in the sky”

What was the best meal in history?



**VOTE
IN OUR
POLL**

From rat pie to diced calf's brain, five food historians introduce a selection of palette-pleasers from the past. Once you've digested their suggestions, turn to page 64 to tell us which one of these dishes you'd most like to eat

Compiled by Matt Elton

VICTORIAN

Boiled rats in a pie

A skinned treat for rich and poor

Rat pie is a dish that straddled the classes in Victorian Britain. Traditionally a delicacy from the north of England, one recipe for rat pie that appeared in the *Sheffield Independent* newspaper on 22 April 1879 suggests preparing and cooking it in the same way as a rabbit pie. The rats should have their tails and skin removed, readers were advised, before being dressed and washed and cut into four pieces. It was also recommended that the meat should be combined with a little pork fat before being encased in pastry, to create a sort of jelly like an aspic. Sometimes rats would be fried in hot oil to remove all the hair, or they could be skinned and boiled.

RD Blackmore's three-volume 1880 novel *Mary Anerley – A Yorkshire Tale* provides further evidence that rat pies were indeed consumed in this region. One of the book's heroes, who has just returned home from war, announces that he will not eat the rat pie that his wife has prepared for the family – a dish so lowly that he compares eating it to being forced to “poke about with pots and tubs, like a pig in a brewery, grain hunting”.

Victorian travelling communities were said to feed on rats as a readily abundant source of food. Sailors also ate them at sea when rations were running perilously low.

Yet, as well as providing sustenance for the desperate, poor and labouring classes, rats were considered a delicacy among wealthy British professional epicures. French cuisine was as integral to British culinary culture in the 18th and 19th centuries as it is today, and an 1870 menu from one of Paris's leading restaurants lists rats cooked in the ashes of roasted dog's leg and then served in a pie with mushrooms. If French gastronomes were eating rat pies, it's safe to assume that their British counterparts were tucking in to them too.

.....
Emma Kay is the author of several books on food history, including *Dining with the Victorians: A Delicious History* (Amberley, 2015)



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CLAIR ROSSITER



TUDOR

Cockentrice

A bird-pig combo that had royals salivating

In an extravagant dinner to impress the king of France, Henry VIII spent the equivalent of £5m on a feast that included 2,000 sheep, 1,000 chickens and a dolphin. Many dishes were designed to amaze, of which some notable examples used the technique of ‘engastration’: a method of cooking in which the remains of one animal are stuffed inside those of another (similar to today’s ‘four-bird’ roasts).

‘Pandora’s cushion’, for instance, was a boned goose stuffed with a boned chicken, which was stuffed with a boned pheasant, which in turn was stuffed with a boned quail. ‘True love roast’ featured 12 birds – one for each day of Christmas – and contained turkey, goose, chicken, pheasant, partridge, pigeon squab, Aylesbury duck, Barbary duck, poussin, guinea fowl, mallard and quail along with a herb and fruit stuffing.

The ‘helmeted cock’, meanwhile, was a combination of pig and capon (a castrated fattened cockerel) in which the animals were roasted separately before the capon was arranged in such a way that it appeared to be riding the pig – and wearing the coats of arms that honoured the lords present.

But possibly the most famous concoction was the ‘cockentrice’ which called for a capon to be boiled, cut in half and sewn to the rear end of a young (suckling) pig. The other halves were used in a similar fashion, with the head of the pig sewn onto the rear end of the capon.

Cockentrice were common entries at great dinners, and a *cokyntryche* is listed among the many feast items at a festival given by John Stafford, bishop of Bath and Wells, on 16 September 1425: “Take a capon, scald it, drain it clean, then cut it in half at the waist. Take a pig, scald it, drain it as the capon, and also cut it in half at the waist. Take needle and thread and sew the front part of the capon to the back part of the pig. And sew the front part of the pig to the back part of the capon. Then stuff it as you would stuff a pig. Put it on a spit, and roast it. When it is done, gild it on the outside with egg yolks, ginger, saffron and parsley juice. Serve it forth for a royal meat.”

Terry Breverton is the author of *The Tudor Kitchen* (Amberley, 2015)

“A cockentrice called for a cockerel to be boiled, cut in half and sewn to a young pig”

“The peacock was roasted, with the legs positioned as they would have been if the bird was still alive, sitting down”

MEDIEVAL

Delicious succulent peacock

A status symbol for elite taste buds

The great and the good in late medieval England usually sat **down** to two or three courses at mealtime. The first course often consisted of a pottage, boiled meats and a fried dish. The second tended to be made up of roast meats and great birds – such as swan – as well as pottage and a set cream dish, jelly and fritter. The meal was usually rounded off with small birds and more fritter.

If that wasn't enough to sate their appetites, in between these courses the diners might tuck in to a 'subtlety' or 'in-between' dish. These were originally delicacies, but later became table set-pieces such as sculptures that had a particular political message. The religious calendar determined what was served, because in the highest echelons of society many people abstained from meat on up to half the days of the year – when they ate fish instead.

People did not eat with forks but, instead, just spoons and knives, which meant that many ingredients were ground down to a

pulp and then reshaped in new forms.

For medieval aristocrats, food was intimately connected with display – and this was especially true of peacocks. These birds could be found in medieval England in small quantities on manors, where wealthy families kept them for show and for exhibiting on the dinner table. The bishop of Bath and Wells is known to have had one on his manor of Fulham in the 1330s.

A mid-15th-century recipe book describes how to prepare a roast peacock. The bird was to be flayed, keeping the skin and feathers together. The peacock was then roasted, with the legs positioned as they would have been if the bird were still living, sitting down. Once the meat was cool, the cook was to dress the peacock again in its skin and feathers “and serve him forth as if he were alive”.

Recipes from the great 14th-century French

cookbook known as the *Viandier of Taillevent* – generally regarded as having been compiled by Guillaume Tirel, a leading cook at the court of France – used a framework to support the bird's neck and to display its tail feathers. The same recipes also describe the peacock's flesh as being eaten with fine salt.

While there was a long-standing myth that peacock flesh was incorruptible, cooks suggested that it should be kept for about 30 days. That said, its gastronomic value was already being questioned: in 1429, Maistre Chiquart, the cook of the Duke of Savoy, recommended dressing a more palatable roast goose with the peacock's feathers rather than the peacock itself.

CM Woolgar is the author of *The Culture of Food in England, 1200–1500*, set to be published by Yale University Press this month





ROMAN

Calf's brain with eggs and gIBLETS

A diced delight for ancient palettes

Last summer, I ran a cookery class at the Latin Summer School in Wells. In a steamy home-economics room, 20 students chopped, pounded, sliced and diced their way to a Roman meal. The results were brilliant: fried pasta, pea omelette, broad beans and bacon, ham in a spicy sauce, pine nut puree, honey and nut cake. After half an hour of eating, all that remained of the dishes were the pictures on various social media.

Roman cuisine can be as practical and tasty as these examples seem to illustrate, but there is another side to it. Not everyone might thrill to the testicles, boiled flamingo, dormice and jellyfish that feature in the cookery book known as *Apicius* (which was written by an author of the same name). While at school, I worked my way through much of this compilation from the late fourth century AD, bringing in dishes such as spiced sausages for my fellow students to sample.

The work is divided into 10 books or sections. Each has a theme: for example, the third book is devoted to garden produce. Here can be found a wonderfully spicy dressing for lettuces that is redolent of the vigorous Roman trade with India. Such was its value that, at one trading station on the subcontinent, a temple to the emperor Augustus was even erected.

Among the elaborate recipes that I found as I worked my way through the fourth book was one that required me to cook brains. I reassured myself that, as a toddler, I had apparently enjoyed eating brains. The local butcher provided me with half a calf's brain. As the recipe instructs, I braised it, after removing the more fibrous parts. Frying the eggs was fine. So was steaming the previously soaked salt fish. The sauce was a reduction of sweet wine seasoned with ground pepper, finely chopped lovage and rue, and thickened with starch.

So far, so good. But the Romans sometimes enjoyed strong tastes, and the final ingredient was chicken gIBLETS. As I chopped these up



“As I chopped the chicken gIBLETS up ready for frying, I wondered if I had been overly generous with the quantities”

ready for frying, I wondered whether I had been overly generous with quantities. Still, the recipe could always be tested out again.

I finely diced the brains and chopped the eggs. Then I added the chicken gIBLETS. I placed the mixture in a round serving dish, shredded the salt fish and put in a mound in the centre – very pretty. Finally, I poured the sauce over. It was time to eat.

In grim scenes, Greek tragedy has woebe-gone characters exclaim “*oimoi, talas*” – “alas, wretched me”. This was my Greek tragedy moment. No other Roman dish has repelled me. One taste of this one and I knew I would never be trying out an adjusted version – despite how highly the dish had been rated by Roman diners.

The pungent smell of chicken gIBLETS and brain lingered long afterwards in my olfactory senses. As the first-century BC Roman poet Lucretius put it: “*Ut quod aliis cibis est aliis fuit acre venenum*” “What is food for some, bitter poison it is for others.”

Mark Grant is the author of *Roman Cookery: Ancient Recipes for Modern Kitchens* (Serif, 2008)



GEORGIAN

Almond hedgehog

A debonair addition to the hostess's armoury

The 'Hedge-Hog' from English cookery writer Hannah Glasse's 1747 bestseller *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* is a slippery beast of almond paste, coaxed from the yolks of 12 eggs, cream, sugar, almonds and butter. It is flavoured with the typical Georgian tastes of orange-flower water and 'canary', or wine, and perhaps coloured with tincture of saffron or juice of sorrel. Sculpted into shape by an expert cook, it is stuck with almonds for spikes and currants for eyes and perhaps floated on a lake of calves'-foot jelly (the task of boiling the wretched feet delegated to the lowliest kitchen maid).

This would initially appear to be the sort of contrivance that we would serve to amuse at a children's party – although, admittedly, modern kids probably wouldn't actually eat it – but it was a serious player in the arsenal of the Georgian hostess. When Glasse bills it "a pretty side-dish at a second course, or in the middle for supper, or in a grand desert [sic]", she means it would be one dish of many, sweet and savoury together. Served in the first or second course, it would have been placed with exacting symmetry on the table for diners to discover as they trooped in

to their mid-afternoon dinner. Or it would be found with other edifices of sugar, jelly and fruit for the dessert course at a ball supper, eaten in the early hours of the morning.

In spite of its debonair whiff of novelty, the recipe looks back to two stalwarts from Tudor and Stuart cookery: the custard and marchpane, the latter of which was somewhat like present-day marzipan. Indeed, Glasse's Hedge-Hog didn't belong to the fresher, unpretentious food increasingly adopted by the new powerhouse in culinary matters: the middle-class hostess. Nor was it part of the highbrow club of French-inspired ragouts and fricassees that were aped, admired, mistrusted and denigrated by the same ladies in equal measure. It also lacked the staying power of the glamorous moulded jellies and the new wow that was hitting the culinary circuit at the time: ice-cream. It is, instead, adorably, eccentrically and quintessentially Georgian. ■

Pen Vogler is the author of *Tea with Jane Austen: Recipes Inspired by Her Novels and Letters* (CICO Books, 2016), in which a simplified recipe for this dish appears

"It is stuck with almonds for spikes and currants for eyes and perhaps floated on a lake of calves'-foot jelly"

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BOOKS



Ben Wilson pictured in central London. "It's very rare in British history that things aren't miserable or ironic, and in the 1850s there was a huge amount of collective self-confidence," he says

Photography by
Helen Atkinson



INTERVIEW / BEN WILSON

"People in the 1850s had a sense they were entering a new period of history"

*Ben Wilson talks to **Matt Elton** about his new book, which argues that the 1850s was a pivotal decade in global development – and that its innovations and concerns have vital lessons for today*

PROFILE BEN WILSON

Born in 1980, Wilson studied at Pembroke College, University of Cambridge. His previous books include *What Price Liberty?: How Freedom Was Won and Is Being Lost* (Faber and Faber, 2009) and *Empire of the Deep: The Rise and Fall of the British Navy* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2013). He lives in Suffolk with his family.

IN CONTEXT

Ben Wilson argues that the 1850s should be seen as a distinct period within the Victorian era because its developments shaped the world for decades. Key among these are the 1851 Great Exhibition, held in London to promote British technology; the 'gold rushes', migration to areas with newly discovered deposits of gold; and the first underwater transmission of a telegraph message, from London to Paris in 1851 – which, in theory, meant that the whole world could be linked in such a way. The Crimean War (1853–56), meanwhile, pitted Russia against the UK, France, Sardinia and the Ottoman empire in a conflict that altered global alliances.

What inspired you to write a book about this particular period?

We now tend to see the Victorian period as a whole, even though it spanned a long time. This means that we sometimes lose sense of the different phases and how they broke down chronologically. The starting point for me writing this book was the telegraph: it defined modernity, breaking down physical barriers of communication and allowing people to get in touch instantaneously.

The more I researched the development of the telegraph, the more I found connections between this apparently miraculous use of technology and a very buoyant, confident time that I saw emerging in 1851 – which, coincidentally, was the year of both the Great Exhibition in London and the first underwater telegraph cable. The more I looked at it, the more that a distinct period of time bookended by events came into sharp relief.

How important was new technology in shaping society in the period?

We're now used to interconnectedness in our networked world, and the telegraph was the start of that networking. This was a world that was speeding up: steamships, railways and canals were eroding barriers and connecting people.

The ways in which technology interacted with other new developments happening at the same time are also very interesting. The gold rushes, to Victoria in Australia and the US state of California, led to a feeling of prosperity and a booming economy. People had a definite sense that they were entering an identifiably new period of history.

The parallels with today are quite strong: just as we had a sense, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, that history had come to an end, the Victorians in this period felt a similar thing – that they were crossing a boundary line in history. They thought that a lot of the world's problems had been solved by the fact that free trade, technology and increased prosperity were fusing together to spark a new civilisation built on those things.

So people at the time saw this as a new step in human development?

Yes, particularly in Britain. The 1851 Great Exhibition helped because it was a physical manifestation of this progress. Its planning had begun in a period of economic depression as a way of trying to show off British manufacturing, but by the time it opened it coincided with a phenomenal economic boom, one of the biggest in human history, that lasted until the mid-1870s.

During this period the global economy grew five or sixfold, with great population migrations to Australia, New Zealand and the US. The whole world was identifiably taking a different shape, and as the British saw this global boom occurring they put themselves right at the centre of it.

The 1850s, then, were Britain at the height of its powers: it's very rare in British history that things aren't miserable or ironic, and there was a huge amount of collective self-confidence that Britain was at the vanguard of this technological revolution. The British thought that free trade, allied with technology and instantaneous communications – rather than revolution or democracy – was going to automatically liberate people and knock down repressive systems and tyranny. The irony is that, by the end of the period, global slavery had become bigger and bigger, but at this point the British thought that they were leading the march of progress through ideas and technology.

"The British saw this global boom taking place, and put themselves at the very centre of it"

And even elsewhere, in places such as Hong Kong, Japan and the US – whose cities saw rapid growth in this period – there was a sense that the world was about to change. People saw the balance in power shifting and going to the peripheries.

There was unease, too, that this self-confidence meant that many were caring less about indigenous people because they were seen as standing in the way of this progress.

Were there specific parts of the world that particularly benefited?

The global impact of the gold rush was huge: it created new shipping lines, new markets and, of course, huge migrations of people. In 1852, which was probably the peak year for migration, about 370,000 people left the British Isles. It was big business moving people around the world: ships became faster because people wanted to get to the gold faster. Gold led to a lot of technological innovations, because the areas in which it was found were often very isolated.

But the gold rush also had a local impact. There was a free market trying to attract migrants to places that might otherwise seem out of the way, and which were often still surrounded by uncultivated land. There were a lot of so-called 'booster towns' billed as the greatest cities ever: surrounded by beautiful landscapes, with resources such as gold or timber that could be exploited. And these towns also grew because miners had enough gold to pay for the finest luxuries: champagne, fancy snuffboxes, the latest fashions. More money was spent in California than gold was exported. People were borrowing on this idea of exponential riches, and a huge market sprang up to supply such goods to these new towns.

How far did slavery power this boom?

Slavery was a difficult thing for the British, because they were spending so much in money and lives policing the export of slaves from west Africa. But the problem was that there was a tension between slavery and free trade. The British hated slavery and loved free trade, and it was quite hard to have those things working together.

For instance, sugar grown in British colonies by enfranchised slaves in the West Indies had previously had preferential treatment in the British market. However, as soon as duties on sugar were liberalised,



The arrival of allied troops in the Crimea as depicted in an 1854 portrait. "There was an uneasy faultline running through the world, with the British and Russian empires pressing on each other – and the flashpoint was in the Crimea," argues Ben Wilson

sugar grown by slaves in Cuba and Brazil flooded the market. This meant that working-class people in Britain could now afford sugar, because it was much cheaper, but it was grown by slaves. The same applied to other resources, such as cotton: the market didn't discriminate between products that were slave-produced and those that weren't.

This was also the decade in which the Crimean War took place, of course. What's your take on that conflict?

The British entered the Crimean War seeing themselves as a forward-thinking, free-trading, technologically advanced nation, and Russia as the opposite: an autocratic empire. But Russia was growing just as fast into areas that Britain was actively contesting: China, Japan, central Asia. If Russia moved into those places it would close off the free-trade system that the British were trying to create. The question was whether modern science, technology and liberal values would prevail, or vast armies and autocracy. There was an uneasy faultline running through the world, with both empires pressing on each other, and the flashpoint was in the Crimea.

You write in the book about beards, which may seem an unlikely subject. What do they tell us about the period?

Beards became very fashionable in the mid-to late 1850s, grown by pioneers and soldiers alike. It was the dawn of mass-photography,

so people saw these unlikely heroes from the frontier or frontline for the first time.

The beard also became an anti-aristocratic symbol, because the aristocracy – whose ranks were typically always clean-shaven – was seen as bungling in the Crimean War and people saw a more meritocratic Britain emerging based on technology and trade. But it was also a symbol of manliness in an age in which character was seen as being better than class.

When and why did this period of growth and optimism come to an end?

I end the book a decade into the future with almost a perversion of these ideas of communication and transport. They had been used by emergent states as tools of nationalism and war, and efforts to regenerate non-European societies had turned into hard, competitive imperialism. Technologies hadn't brought people together; in a way, they'd pushed people further apart, and created nationalism and imperialism and intense competition between people.

Britain was facing relative decline in the world: competition between emergent states meant that they industrialised very quickly, and then wanted to go and grab resources from around the world. Idealism rapidly drained away, and Britain found itself on the wrong side of a lot of issues: it came close to supporting the south during the American Civil War, for instance. Ideas that once seemed fresh and idealistic, such as free trade, began to be used as an excuse for not

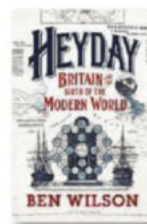
"People in the 1850s thought that the world would change just through sheer force of progress"

doing anything or letting the market play itself out. The world of the 1860s was much more cynical and aggressively competitive.

What lessons does this period have for us in the 21st century?

I think we're already starting to learn the same lessons they learnt: that unbridled confidence and utopianism can have a bitter end, and that technologies seen as full of hope, freedom and democracy become used for surveillance or government control.

The other lesson is that there are no magic answers: people in the 1850s thought that the world would change just through sheer force of progress. Now we know that it doesn't always work like that: there's not always a radiant end to using these tools of democracy and freedom. ■



Heyday: The 1850s and the Dawn of the Global Age
by Ben Wilson (Basic Books, 520 pages, £25)

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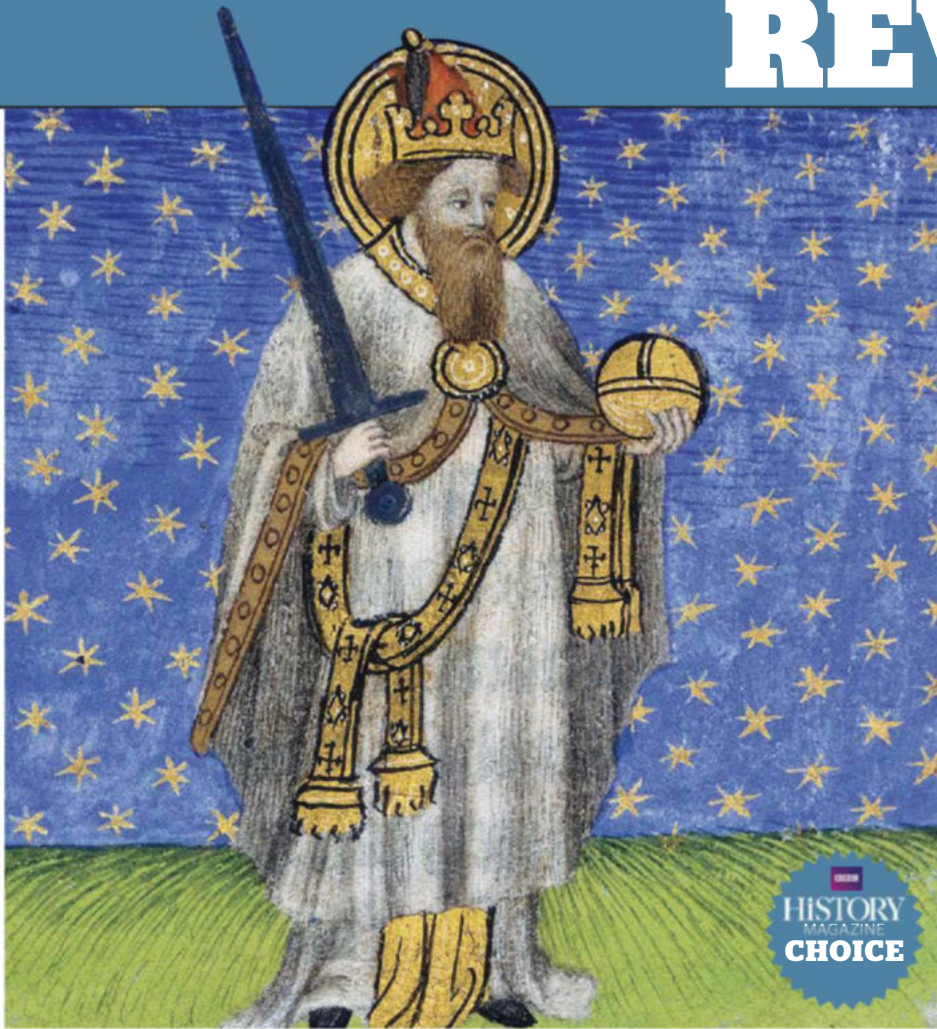
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REVIEWS



Charlemagne, depicted here in a 15th-century manuscript, "is generally regarded as founder of the Holy Roman Empire, yet his coronation did not immediately launch an enduring empire"

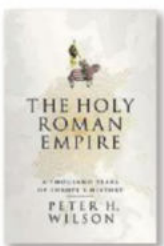
Ages of empire

JOACHIM WHALEY *praises a lengthy, ambitious single-volume history of the Holy Roman Empire – in all of its disparate forms*

The Holy Roman Empire

by Peter H Wilson

Allen Lane, 1,008 pages, £35



"Neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire": Voltaire's characterisation of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation has seemed to many to be a just description of an incoherent

and defenceless system of government. Charlemagne is generally regarded as its founder, yet his coronation as emperor

in AD 800 did not immediately launch an enduring empire. When the first German kings assumed the imperial title in 962, the empire was not yet 'holy', and it only became 'German' around 1500. As the title evolved, the polity to which it was attached underwent substantial transformations until it was dissolved under pressure from Napoleon in 1806.

Observers in the 17th and 18th century found it difficult to classify the empire, while 19th and early 20th-century German historians despised it for not being a nation state, or for being a failed nation state. Germany's critics often sought to establish the continuity

from this first Reich to the Third Reich. More positive later assessments of the empire have viewed it either as a trans-national precursor of the European Union or as the first German nation state. More often than not, the narrative has served the needs of the present rather than reflecting the reality of the empire or the experience of its inhabitants.

The complexity of its history is exemplified by the absence of a capital and by procedures for the election and coronation of rulers. The empire never had a capital city: its notional centre was simply the court of whoever was emperor at the time. From the mid-15th century that was Vienna, but the 'diet', or assembly, and one of the two courts of law, met elsewhere. Emperors were crowned at Frankfurt, while crown jewels and other imperial regalia were kept at Nuremberg.

Peter Wilson's massive new book aims to show how the empire developed as a coherent body over 1,000 years. Above all, he wants to emphasise its significance at the heart of European history. His approach is unusual: he underlines the continuity and unity of his subject by proceeding thematically rather than chronologically, organising his text around four themes: ideals, belonging, governance and society.

The empire's function as the secular arm of Christendom was crucial to its foundation, and fundamental for many centuries. Even after the Reformation, the idea of a single Christian realm remained central, as the empire's wars against the Ottomans and the perennial schemes for the reconciliation of Catholics and Protestants showed.

The empire's claim to singularity increasingly conflicted with the rise of other sovereign states. Yet it also created an overarching framework that could accommodate a great variety of lands and languages. Loyalty to the empire was completely compatible with loyalty

"This massive book aims to show how the empire developed"



COMING SOON...

"From fresh accounts of India's role in the Second World War and an infamous Australian outlaw to studies of gay culture and ancient atheism, next issue's reviews pages promise to explore a diverse range of titles. Plus, I'll be talking to Clare Jackson about her new biography of Charles II." *Matt Elton, reviews editor*

to a local or regional fatherland. Hence it could include realms as diverse as Italy, Bohemia and the Low Countries.

The key to continuity was governance. The emperors, elected by leading princes, held things together. During the first six centuries, several dynasties were undermined by the lack of a durable power base or by failure to produce a viable heir. The Habsburgs solved this problem from the 15th century by amassing a formidable collection of territories and by only once, briefly, failing to provide a direct male heir. Government developed in noble territories and cities; local and regional networks – later formally constituted peacekeeping organisations – ensured cohesiveness and, ultimately,

"The empire did have a continuous history, but also comprised a series of different, distinct phases"

the pacification of a polity ruled jointly by the emperor and estates.

The thematic approach means each of the 13 chapters involves quite a bit of to and fro. Anyone new to the subject might be advised to start with the 54-page chronology Wilson provides. Yet his avoidance of an overarching narrative also raises a key issue: at one level the empire of course did have a continuous history, but also comprised a series of different, distinct phases, from the Frankish Carolingian system in the 9th and 10th centuries to the Habsburg system from the 15th. Though Bohemia and parts of Italy remained attached to the end, this is ultimately the story of the emergence of a German empire.

Wilson synthesises many of the results of the research over the past 60 years that have dispensed with the old myths and revised our view of the empire. His rich and thoughtful book will undoubtedly stimulate further debate. **II**

Joachim Whaley is author of *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire 1493-1806* (Oxford University Press, 2012)

Deep secrets

MICHAEL GOODMAN *commends an in-depth look at Britain's submarine efforts in the years after the Second World War*

The Silent Deep: The Royal Navy Submarine Service Since 1945

by Peter Hennessy and James Jinks

Allen Lane, 864 pages, £30



The authors of this interesting, informative book make a great sales pitch at its start: "Scarcely a patch of the two thirds of the world's surface that is covered in water has escaped the presence

of a Royal Navy submarine at some point over the last century." Yet, as they explain, we know remarkably little about such activities; this is all the more curious given that Britain's submarine service is a century old. The reason for such reticence is the mystery that shrouds submarines, submariners and their actions. Indeed, for the British establishment, submarine activities are a secret on a par with special forces and intelligence activities – they are both deniable and denied – and for good reason are known as the 'silent service'.

To get around this information blackout, the authors have been given clearances and access to the 'crown jewels' or, as they put it, the book "has been prepared with a high level of co-operation from the Royal Navy". The result is a richly referenced account that scrapes away a century's worth of secrecy.

The book starts like a novel, with an engrossing account of the life of a submariner. These are, we are reminded, people who "enter into a contract to neglect their own bodies" for months on end: there is no natural light, no space for real exercise,

and the healthy food runs out after three weeks. The camaraderie and family environment of a modern submarine is clearly attractive to some people, but it was not always like that.

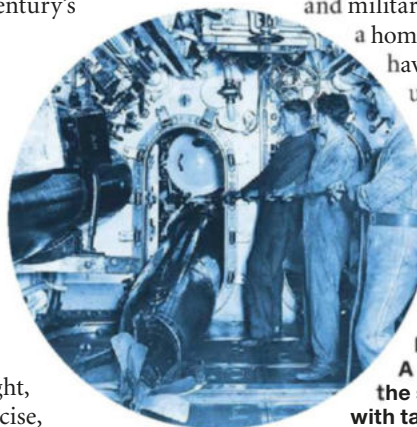
The majority of the book is a chronological account from the end of the Second World War to the present day – and, by exploring the submarine service's possible futures, beyond. It provides a rich account of the exigencies of, firstly world war, and then Cold War. This was a time of survival, and many submariners were the front line of British defence. In an era when the replacement for Trident and its associated submarines is hotly debated, it is not far-fetched to argue that this view still holds true today.

The Silent Deep covers a number of themes throughout its chronological chapters. The narrative focuses on the political developments and requirements for submarines, on the technological breakthroughs in their development, and, from the 1960s, the nuclear focus of their weapons systems. Interspersed are fantastic tales of derring-do and life under the ocean's waves.

Views towards submarines are hard to divorce from views of Britain's nuclear weapons programme. Hennessy and Jinks avoid entering into the debate on Trident, but are undoubtedly fans of submarines. This is as much a political and military history as it is

a homage to those who have served Britain under the waves. **H**

Michael Goodman,
King's College
London



British submariners load a torpedo, 1939. A new look at life under the sea is "interspersed with tales of derring-do"

GETTY IMAGES



Frederick the Great gives a flute recital in this 19th-century painting. "There have been many biographies of Frederick, but Tim Blanning's masterpiece stands out" says Christopher Clark

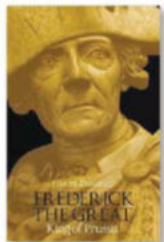
From Prussia, with love

CHRISTOPHER CLARK rates a biography of the 18th-century Prussian king that adds much to our view of his personality and sexuality

Frederick the Great

by Tim Blanning

Allen Lane, 672 pages, £30



No other German monarch has had as vivid and complex an afterlife as Frederick the Great, and it is easy to see why. His military ventures laid foundations for Prussia's later pre-eminence in

Germany. He was a man of the enlightenment and a practitioner of religious tolerance. His music (especially for the flute) has an enduring appeal. He wrote poetry, philosophy and history in elegant French. And behind the acerbic public persona is an elusive, self-conscious man who has never ceased to fascinate.

There have been many biographies of Frederick and quite a few good ones, but Tim Blanning's masterpiece stands out. It is beautifully written and packed with arresting observations. Blanning wears his learning lightly, but his mastery of context, and deep reading of the sources, are evident on every page. What results is a startlingly textured account that is dynamic across the entire range of his activities. This is Frederick the Great in 3D, as we have never seen him before.

Blanning offers an unforgettable account of the horrors of Frederick's childhood and adolescence, much of

"This is Frederick in 3D, as we have never seen him before"

which was spent cowering under the verbal and physical blows of a father whose aggression verged on the psychopathic. He exposes with fine brush strokes the convolutions of the king's personal life. The account of his sexuality is better than anything else in the literature. His biographers have tended to tiptoe around this issue: some insisted (contrary to virtually all available evidence) either that Frederick was enthusiastically heterosexual or was prevented from being so only by an obscure surgical wound to his genitals. Others have hinted coyly at 'homo-erotic yearnings' and moved on.

Blanning is having none of this. He is scrupulously attentive to the limits of the sources, but his analysis of Frederick's writing, supported by contemporary testimony from the king's intimates, leaves readers in no doubt that Frederick was not just homosexual, but knew, accepted and even celebrated his own sexuality. This is important, because homosexuality was one of the keys to his existence. It was a world beyond the ken of his hated father, defined his imaginary relationship with the classical past, framed his friendships, and provided leitmotifs for his poetry and architectural projects.

Like all the best biographies, this brings a world to life around its protagonist. The literary public sphere of 18th-century Prussia, life in the civil service, and the world of provincial commerce all swim into focus around the commanding figure at the book's centre. And those with an interest in the king's wars will not be disappointed. There are excellent accounts of diplomacy and military administration and compelling analyses of all the major battles (though Blanning is less impressed than some of his predecessors by Frederick's generalship).

Blanning's Frederick is not a likeable man. He could be breathtakingly cruel in his personal relationships and was almost pathologically vain. And yet, having read this book, one can understand all too well how admiration for this complex man bathed the Prussian state in a glow of charisma that took generations to fade. ■

Christopher Clark is regius professor of history at St Catharine's College, Cambridge

The abduction of the Native American Pocahontas by English forces, as depicted in a 17th-century engraving. Page Smith's book "aims to go beyond polemic in favour of storytelling," says Karen Jones



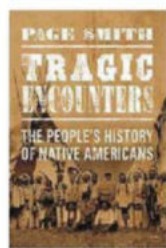
Native tongues

KAREN JONES explores a posthumously published account of Native American people and settlers to the United States

Tragic Encounters: The People's History of Native Americans

by Page Smith

Amberley, 496 pages, £25



Page Smith was a well-regarded, prodigious US historian most famous for his eight-volume *A People's History of the United States*, published from 1976 to 1987. Known for provocative takes

on historians and historiography, Smith championed an approach that focused on storytelling and the narrative arc.

Tragic Encounters is no exception. In this book – compiled posthumously from a draft left in Smith's papers – the author emphasises a narrative history that takes readers from early encounters between settlers and native people at Jamestown in the 17th century to the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre. His aim, articulated in a short preface, was to go beyond polemic in favour of storytelling told "as simply and directly as possible".

With a nod to what Smith calls "inherent drama and abiding human interest" we are taken on a whistle-stop tour of colonial contact through conquest in the west, predominantly told through the testimony of first-hand witnesses.

'People's history' has long since become part of the academic mainstream and Smith's work is important in highlighting that development. In line with its popular leanings, the book is easy to pick up and will no doubt appeal to those interested in Native American history. There are some nice case-study chapters (the pioneering 1804 Lewis and Clark expedition across the western US and the work of traveller and painter George Catlin in depicting Native American life, to name but two) that bring the story to life through a focus on biography.

"This is a whistle-stop tour of colonial contact as told by first-hand witnesses"

However, there are a couple of notable caveats to the book that will strike 21st-century readers. Editorial revisions to the work have been minimal, meaning that we do get a 'raw' product, but also one which is also somewhat antiquated in its prose and style. Some may point out that such criticism is invalid: after all, the work was left unfinished in Smith's papers when he died in 1995 and all historians are creatures of their time.

That said, even in the mid-1990s when *Tragic Encounters* was drafted, the 'new western history' movement – which reconsidered the US frontier's past in terms of factors such as class, race and gender – had already stormed the halls of academe to present a more nuanced exploration of conquest and cultural collision on the American frontier. By that time we had also been treated to an

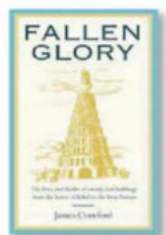
Social constructs

LEO HOLLIS on a look at history's lost buildings that is stronger on human stories than the physical structures themselves

Fallen Glory: The Lives and Deaths of 20 Lost Buildings

by James Crawford

Old Street Publishing, 576 pages, £25



Why are we so interested in lost cities? Why do ruins grow larger in our imagination as their bricks crumble into the desert? Here, heritage expert James Crawford goes in pursuit of the

lives of places that are no longer there. In a series of looping, engaging stories that combine history, myth, biography and architecture, empires rise and fall, megalomaniacs create monuments and are forgotten, societies are founded and civilisations crushed. It is a whirlwind of stories that takes in a global history of architectural dreaming.

Crawford is fascinated with how buildings are the location for myth and history making. Thus the chapter on the forum in Rome is excellent on recreating

the events and people who crossed this space. We are led from when the early Renaissance monk Poggio Bracciolini sought to rediscover the ancient legacy of the place, through to the funeral of Julius Caesar, before quickly shooting off to Livy's first-century BC account of the city's origins. The section also takes in Napoleon and Mussolini and ends with the observation that "a good argument has always defined this broad square of ground. It still enshrines, in its ruins... the eternal human capacity to disagree".

This is thrilling narrative but makes for both a rather bland and slightly debatable conclusion: when I visited the forum on a hot August morning last year, perpetual crisis was not the abiding impression that I came away with.



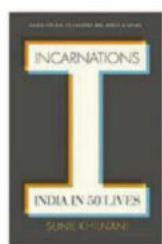
A people's history

ANDREW ROBINSON delves into a welcome set of biographies telling the stories of leading figures from India's diverse past

Incarnations: India in 50 Lives

by Sunil Khilnani

Allen Lane, 656 pages, £30



Historical studies of India as a civilisation tend to focus on either the colonial period and after or on the pre-colonial period. They also generally neglect biography, especially the lives of pre-colonial

Indians. Sunil Khilnani's wide-ranging new book, based on a current BBC radio series, *Incarnations: India in 50 Lives*, is therefore welcome and refreshing, not to mention appealingly free of the post-colonial academic jargon that ghettoises India. With few preliminaries or much narrative thread, it offers 50 short biographical essays arranged in chronological order, beginning in the fifth century BC with the Buddha – the first recognisable individual in Indian history – and finishing in the present day with the industrialist Dhirubhai Ambani.

Most essays kick off with a vignette of the relevance in modern India of the subject. Many are rulers, such as Ashoka and Akbar, or political figures, including Mohandas Gandhi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Indira Gandhi. But there are also essays on social reformers such as the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, innovators such as the industrialist Jamsetji Tata and artists such as the poet Kabir and the writer Rabindranath Tagore. Four out of the 50 were born outside India, including the Calcutta-based orientalist William Jones.

Not every choice is a shoo-in, though almost all are valid and interesting. The problem, inevitably, is with the omissions. Khilnani remarks that he hopes "readers will argue strenuously about the 50 names". No Ravi Shankar, India's most widely known classical musician? No RK Narayan, India's greatest English-language novelist? Defensible, perhaps.

But to me it seems odd to not have an essay on Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, especially given Khilnani's expertise on him. And to omit any modern scientist is strange: CV Raman, India's first Nobel laureate in science, should have been included; so probably, should Vikram Sarabhai, the founder of its space programme.

The most insightful and authoritative essays – for instance, those on Mahatma Gandhi and his opponent, the lawyer Bhimrao Ambedkar – reflect Khilnani's background as a professor of politics. He begins his take on Gandhi at a screening of a film about the plot to kill the leader in 1948. As the film's assassin shoots Gandhi, the Gujarati audience goes wild – with applause. "It is right that Gandhi should have enemies, and unsurprising that he provokes so many angles of attack," writes Khilnani, and then convincingly explains why. Less successful are his takes on artists, which feel less assured. Nevertheless, this captures the vitality, diversity and uniqueness of India's civilisation in an original and stimulating format. ■

Andrew Robinson is the author of *India: A Short History* (Thames & Hudson, 2014)



Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, is one of the 50 Indian individuals to feature in Sunil Khilnani's new book

'Indian history' of the American west in the form of Dee Brown's iconic *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970). Thinking in such terms, Page Smith's book leaves a lot out (we don't hear much about indigenous Americans pre-contact, and although there is a last chapter entitled 'After Wounded Knee' there is little coverage of Native Americans in the 20th century).

On its dust jacket, *Tragic Encounters* promises "a new slant on a very old subject". I'd argue the converse: namely, that it offers an old slant on a new subject – clearly illuminating the promise of people's history but also pointing to the necessity of extending the cast of eyewitnesses to include indigenous voices. ■

Karen Jones is senior lecturer in history at the University of Kent

Crawford seems more interested in the stories that circle his buildings rather than the buildings themselves. As a result the book gains focus when talking about places rather than architecture, and the actual bricks and mortar are rarely more than sketchily drawn. This is a shame, as his selection is ambitious, taking in sites such as Akhetaten in ancient Egypt, Cordoba in Moorish Spain and Hong Kong's Kowloon Walled City. In the end, however, he misses an opportunity to bring these diverse examples together with a convincing argument for why we build, and how architecture informs our lives. ■

Leo Hollis is the author of books including *Cities are Good for You* (Bloomsbury, 2013)

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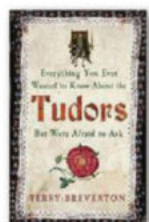
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PAPERBACKS

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the Tudors but Were Afraid to Ask

by Terry Breverton

Amberley, 336 pages, £14.99



The Tudors are the best known dynasty in British history. They are endlessly studied, written about, debated and, especially in recent years, represented on stage and screen. So surely we know everything we could possibly want to about the king who married six times, the queen who didn't marry at all, and the rest? Perhaps not. Terry Breverton has previously written on Jasper Tudor, Henry Tudor and Tudor cookery, so is well placed to reveal lesser known facts about this well-trodden period of history.

The book is divided into two parts, the first telling a history of each monarch and the second exploring a host of different aspects of 16th-century life, from farming and animals to witchcraft. The former is a useful reference guide but adds little to our knowledge of the Tudors because it is not based on any new research. The real value of Breverton's book lies in the second part, which uncovers a wealth of fascinating detail about what it was like to live in Tudor times – whether you were a courtier or a cordwainer.

With gruesome facts about toilet cleaners, litter louts and botched executions, this is *Horrible Histories* for grown-ups. It ends with a review of 'Tudor superlatives', which reveals a staggering number of firsts, bests and worsts to which the Tudors can lay claim. Who knew that the first purpose-

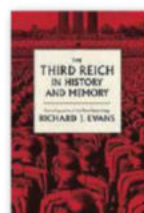
built shopping centre was designed in 1566? Or that the most expensive fighting cockerel cost the equivalent of £20,000? If Breverton doesn't provide depth, he does convey an extraordinary breadth of information. As a book to dip into, it's great, and as a source of facts with which to impress friends and fellow quiz team members, it's even better.

Tracy Borman's new book, *The Private Lives of the Tudors: Uncovering the Hidden Secrets of Britain's Greatest Dynasty*, is set to be published by Hodder in May

The Third Reich in History and Memory

by Richard J Evans

Abacus, 496 pages, £12.99



This weighty but extremely readable book of original essays and recycled book reviews airs the trenchant views

of Richard J Evans, the recently retired regius professor of modern history at the University of Cambridge, on a wide range of topics drawn from his lifelong study of Nazi Germany.

Ranging from Germany's collapse in 1918 and 1945 to Hitler's health (not bad, considering) and love life (surprisingly conventional) and the culture of Weimar Berlin, there are few Nazi-linked subjects that Evans does not touch upon, and many that he examines in revealing depth.

A spiky controversialist, Evans does not hesitate to get stuck into one of the major disagreements dividing Third Reich historians, arguing powerfully against those who claim that the Nazis ran the

Reich with a relatively light touch since they had the consent of the vast majority of Germans. On the contrary, Evans writes, their rule required a vast apparatus of repression, coercion and naked violence against its many opponents to stay safely in power. ■

Nigel Jones is the author of books including *Peace and War: Britain in 1914* (Head of Zeus, 2014)

The Devils' Alliance: Hitler's Pact with Stalin, 1939-1941

by Roger Moorhouse

Vintage, 400 pages, £9.99



The period of the Nazi-Soviet Pact is one of the most curious of the Second World War.

The astonishing agreement signed by the foreign ministers of the two regimes, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Vyacheslav Molotov, in Moscow in late August 1939 brought together political polar opposites.

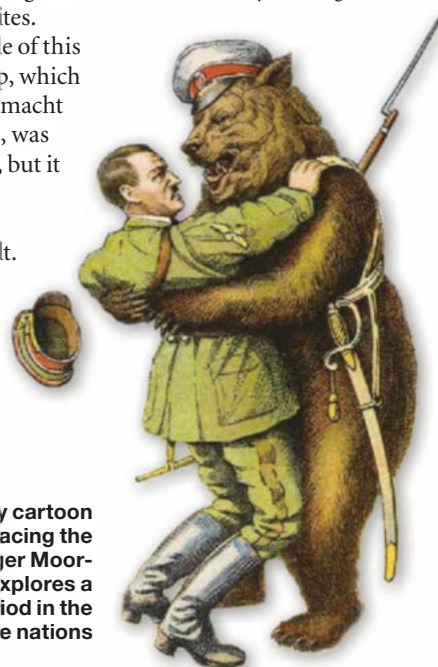
Contrary to the title of this book, the relationship, which lasted until the Wehrmacht invasion of June 1941, was far from an 'alliance', but it did make the initial conquests by Nazi Germany less difficult. The pact was accompanied by secret codicils under which Poland was eliminated as a state

and the Baltic countries were absorbed into the USSR.

Roger Moorhouse has a tendency to equate the policies of the two 'devils', noting the "remarkable symmetry" of occupation policy in the territories they seized by force. This is done by implication in the text and more explicitly in the final chapter. And, while the Stalinist USSR certainly had many 'victims', both within its borders and beyond them, lumping it together so completely with Hitler's Third Reich seems hard to justify.

These qualifications aside, Moorhouse's book provides an intelligent, well-informed synthesis. It is especially strong on economic aspects of the German-Soviet relationship and in its description of the difficulties that ideologues on both sides had in explaining the bizarre new relationship between the two countries and their political movements.

Evan Mawdsley is professor of international history at the University of Glasgow



A contemporary cartoon shows Hitler embracing the Soviet Union. Roger Moorhouse's book explores a "curious" period in the relations between the nations



A butcher's shop as seen in an 1822 illustration. Janet Ellis's novel follows the lives of a butcher's apprentice and a girl "who will go to any lengths to get him"

FICTION

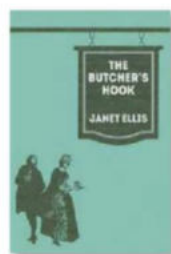
Meat and murder

NICK RENNISON rates a twisting, unsettling tale of Georgian obsession from an author known for her children's TV career

The Butcher's Hook

by Janet Ellis

Two Roads, 368 pages, £12.99



Anne Jacob's family may be comfortably off in Georgian London, but their house is not a happy one. Her father is a grumpy, petty tyrant who shows her no love and expects her

to do his every bidding. Her cowed mother has just given birth to a baby girl and is too sickly to provide much affection. Anne feels little for her new sister and is still mourning a brother who died as a toddler. Secretive and silent, she lives in her own private world. She is bright, but has little opportunity to exercise her intelligence; imaginative, but confined in a colourless household.

Into her life comes a butcher's apprentice, Frederick Warner, nicknamed 'Fub', whom she encounters when he delivers meat to the household. Immediately attracted to him, she finds excuses to venture into London's streets

and see him again at the butcher's shop. Soon she is taking any opportunity she can to escape her stifling home in order to meet and flirt with him.

Her obsession grows apace and, one night, Fub climbs into her room and they make love. Anne begins to plan for the passionate life of sex and freedom that she believes awaits them. Unfortunately, her father has very different ideas: he has singled out the odious but wealthy Simeon Onions as a suitable husband for her, and she is forced to endure his unwelcome attentions. All Anne wants is Fub and, as this ominous tale progresses, it becomes ever clearer that she will go to any lengths to get him.

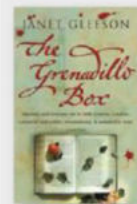
As Janet Ellis acknowledges, *The Butcher's Hook* is not the kind of book that people might expect an ex-*Blue Peter* presenter such as herself to write. Dark and sometimes bloody, it can be an unsettling read. Yet it's also a gripping work of fiction, full of twists and surprises, and Anne, who tells her story in her own idiosyncratic voice, is a distinctively disturbing character. **II**

Nick Rennison is the author of *Carver's Quest* (Corvus, 2013)

THREE MORE TALES OF THE GEORGIAN GOTHIC

The Grenadillo Box

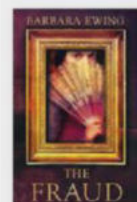
Janet Gleeson (2002)



In this ingenious, deviously constructed debut novel, Nathaniel Hopson, journeyman to furniture-maker Thomas Chippendale, is working at the country home of Lord Montfort when he stumbles across the peer's body. The death seems to be a suicide but Hopson is not convinced. Once another body is discovered, he is propelled into an investigation that leads him through high and low society towards truths kept hidden for 20 years.

The Fraud

Barbara Ewing (2009)

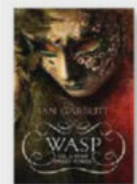


Florentine portrait painter Filippo di Vicellio and his wife Angelica are the toasts of 1760s London, but secrets and lies lurk beneath the glitter of their

lives in Pall Mall: neither Filippo nor his sister Francesca are what they seem. In Ewing's tale of deception and corruption in the Georgian art world, the Royal Academy is in its quarrelsome infancy and a woman is forced to hide her talent with tragic consequences.

Wasp

Ian Garbutt (2015)



Disgraced governess Bethany Harris enters the House of Masques – an establishment in which the elite of Georgian society is entertained

by upmarket courtesans – and begins the training which will transform her into 'Wasp', an appropriate companion for the rich and powerful. As she learns more about the past lives of her fellow inhabitants, she begins to understand the ways in which dark and dangerous undercurrents swirling beneath the surface threaten the house's very existence.

TV & RADIO



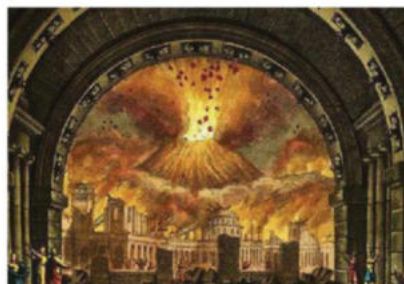
A buried past

Pompeii: Life Before Death

TV BBC One,
scheduled for March

When Pompeii was smothered in ash from the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79, it left behind a time capsule of the Roman world. But it's a delicate archaeological site, which makes the work of the Great Pompeii Project, tasked with investigating and restoring the town, crucial to preserving the past.

Enter Mary Beard, who joins a team using the latest technology to explore the site by, for example, employing CT scanning to investigate the remains of those who died in the eruption. The resulting documentary gives an insight into day-to-day life 2,000 years ago.



Vesuvius erupts in an engraving depicting the last days of Pompeii

Literary heights

Living Like a Brontë

TV BBC Two,
scheduled for Saturday 12 March

Two years prior to the publication of *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, things looked bleak for sisters Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë. Their father was going blind, their booze-sodden brother had suffered a breakdown and Charlotte was suffering with depression.

How did the sisters come to create art out of such adversity? To try to answer this question, broadcaster Martha Kearney, columnist Lucy Mangan and novelist Helen Oyeyemi travel to Haworth Parsonage to explore the writers' lives. The presenters relive the sisters' daily routines, and immerse themselves in the Brontës' diaries.

Class impasse

Creator Joseph Bullman introduces us to a genealogy series that says much about British society

The Secret History of My Family

TV BBC Two, scheduled for March

While it may be no surprise to learn that our ancestors' social standing has an impact on where we ourselves stand in society, a new series suggests the effects of class play down through the generations far more profoundly than we may realise. Described by its creator and producer, Joseph Bullman, as "a reverse *Who Do You Think You Are?*", *The Secret History of My Family* traces the descendants of 19th-century slum dwellers and also of the "upper-class slum tourists, philanthropists and do-gooders" who met them on expeditions to what the well-to-do called "the Dark Continent" of working-class Britain.

"One of the things you get is a clear picture of social mobility in Britain, or in most cases the complete and utter lack of it," Bullman tells *BBC History Magazine*.

By this, Bullman means that most of the descendants he encounters over the show's four episodes are still at the same level of society as their forebears. The most spectacular exception to this pattern turns out to be the Gadbury sisters, a trio of pickpockets raised in 1830s Shoreditch. Two of the sisters were

transported to Australia, with one sent to Tasmania at a time when the majority of the population was made up of those banished from Britain.

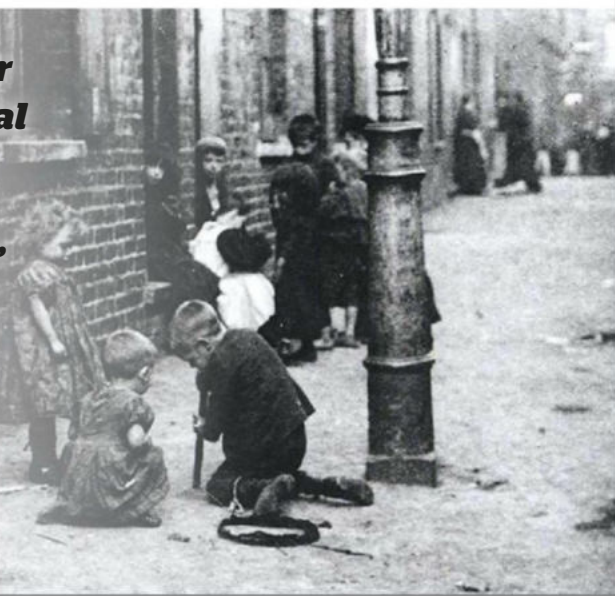
"They simply couldn't discriminate against convicts in the same way, so within a generation or two that girl's descendants had ascended up the social ladder really rapidly," says Bullman. In an Australia where nobody could afford to be too snobby and "even the scuzziest London criminals" could prosper, the Gadburies' Australian descendants include two supreme court judges and a state government premier.

Bullman's research also shows there was an increase in social mobility in the immediate wake of the Second World War, and that those who took advantage of this opportunity were "the people who didn't fit in or feel quite at home in the community they grew up in".

But whatever lives we lead, one of the lessons of the series is how our forebears, indistinct "ghosts in the nursery", affect the present. "You'd have this eerie experience of knowing about a historical figure [through research]," says Bullman, "and then meeting someone who struck you as the living reproduction of that historical figure." **H**

"You get a clear picture of social mobility in Britain, or the utter lack of it"

A scene from a London slum in the 19th century. Working-class Britain was often referred to as the 'Dark Continent'



Islamic State destroyed the Lion of Allat when it seized Palmyra in 2015



Lost treasures

The Museum of Lost Objects
RADIO Radio 4, scheduled for Monday
 29 February

The looting of ancient artefacts and the destruction of archaeological sites in Syria and Iraq puts, it's been argued, an obligation on us. We need to tell the stories of lost treasures, in a sense to create a first draft of history here.

The Museum of Lost Objects does this and more. Presented by writer Kanishk Tharoor, the weekday series tells the stories of 10 antiquities and culturally important locations. It mixes up local histories with personal experience as it explores what these despoiled gems have

meant to different generations.

The Lion of Allat, for example, a statue of a big cat shown holding a gazelle, once decorated the temple of a pre-Islamic goddess in Palmyra. When the militants of Islamic State took the ancient Semitic city, it was one of the first objects the group destroyed. In addition to hearing from Michal Gawlikowski, the Polish archeologist who rediscovered the statue, the series discusses the wider symbolism of the lion as an emblem of power.

Other programmes deal with the destruction of World Heritage Sites in the world's oldest city, Aleppo; the loss of the Armenian Memorial at Der Zor; and the looting of Baghdad's Iraq Museum in the wake of the 2003 invasion.

Ideas that endure

The Story of China
DVD (2entertain, 12, £19.99)

China is a rising superpower, but how much do most of us really know about its history? In truth, many of us can at best conjure up a jumbled picture featuring terracotta warriors, a big wall, Mao, protests in Tiananmen Square, and a trip to the cinema to see *The Last Emperor*.

Thank heavens then for Michael Wood whose six-part history, recently aired on BBC Two, fills in the gaps. Up to a point, that is, because the framing episode, 'Ancestors', gives us a sense of the sheer age of China's

civilisation – much has been lost in the mists of time. The episode sees Wood joining members of the Qin family gathering for an ancestor-honouring 'Tomb Sweeping Day'. Even the horrors of the Cultural Revolution, Wood shows us, couldn't destroy people's sense of deep links with the past.

It's not the most obvious way to begin a history series, but from here Wood's approach is more conventional, with each episode largely dealing with a specific era.

Nevertheless, the idea that China's people have created a distinctive view of the world, one we urgently need to understand in an era when China exerts more and more influence, links the documentaries.



Michael Wood, pictured in Yangzhou, gives us a sense of China's sheer age

WANT MORE ?

We'll send you news of the best history shows every Friday. Sign up now at historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/newsletter



The Star of David outside a synagogue in Venice

In 1992, at the height of the Balkan conflict, the postmaster of the Somerset town of Wincanton saw TV footage of Bosnian civilians being herded into Serbian camps. Rather than stand by, he organised a bus and rescued 18 refugees from the war zone. In **The Day the Refugees Came** (Radio 4, Sunday 13 March) Michael Palin explores how both town and refugees were changed by this act.

The Venetian Ghetto (Radio 3, Sunday 13 March) marks 500 years since the foundation of the watery city-state's Jewish ghetto. Jerry Brotton presents. Listen out too for **The Easter Rising 1916** (Radio 4, Friday 18 March), which relives a key moment in Ireland's journey towards becoming an independent state. The programme is presented by the LSE's Heather Jones (read her feature on page 22).

On BBC Radio Scotland, the social history series **Our Story** (March) begins by relating how Austrian refugees from Nazism, living in north-east Scotland, established the first Camphill community, aimed at helping children with special needs.

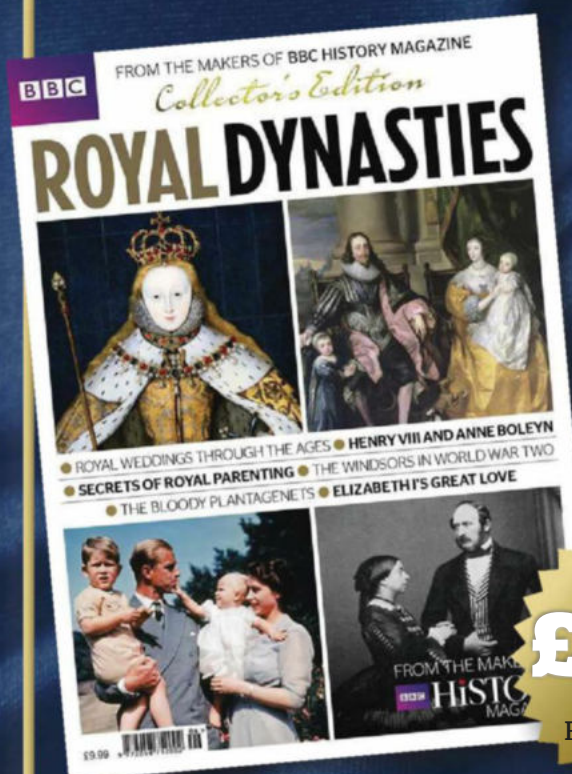
Scotland: The Promised Land (BBC Two Scotland, March – available via iPlayer across the UK) documents how the 10 years that followed the First World War shaped modern Scottish history.

Among the highlights on PBS America, **Mosquito Reborn: Gaining Altitude** (Thursday 10 March) tells the story of an aircraft that was crucial to Allied victory in 1939–45.

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OUT & ABOUT

HISTORY EXPLORER

Capability Brown

On the 300th anniversary of Brown's birth, Nige Tassell and Dr Sarah Rutherford visit **Blenheim Palace** to reflect on the great landscape architect

It comes at you all of a sudden. One minute you're driving along an astonishingly pretty side-street in the Oxfordshire town of Woodstock, thinking – as you enter what seems to be just a shoppers' car-park – you've reached a dead-end. But then there's a grand archway, which offers one of the most extraordinary views in Britain – the majestic sweep of the grounds of Blenheim Palace, the vast country house that, as well as being the birthplace of Winston Churchill, is a designated Unesco World Heritage Site.

The view is what we've come to recognise as quintessentially English – undulating grasslands framed by enchanting woodland and, at the park's epicentre, a Cotswold-stone bridge mirrored in the silver waters of a giant lake.

Blenheim Palace was designed by the architect John Vanbrugh at the dawn of the 18th century – the building conceived as a reward to John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, for his military victories over the French. But the stunning grounds in which it sits was the product of one man's imagination: Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716–83). The foremost landscape designer of the 18th century – or, indeed, any century – Brown was a self-made man, a Northumbrian whose services were called upon by kings, lords and prime ministers. A later duke of Marlborough was one such client, in 1763 commissioning Brown to reconfigure Blenheim. The project took 11 years.



Capability Brown
designed gardens for kings,
lords and prime ministers

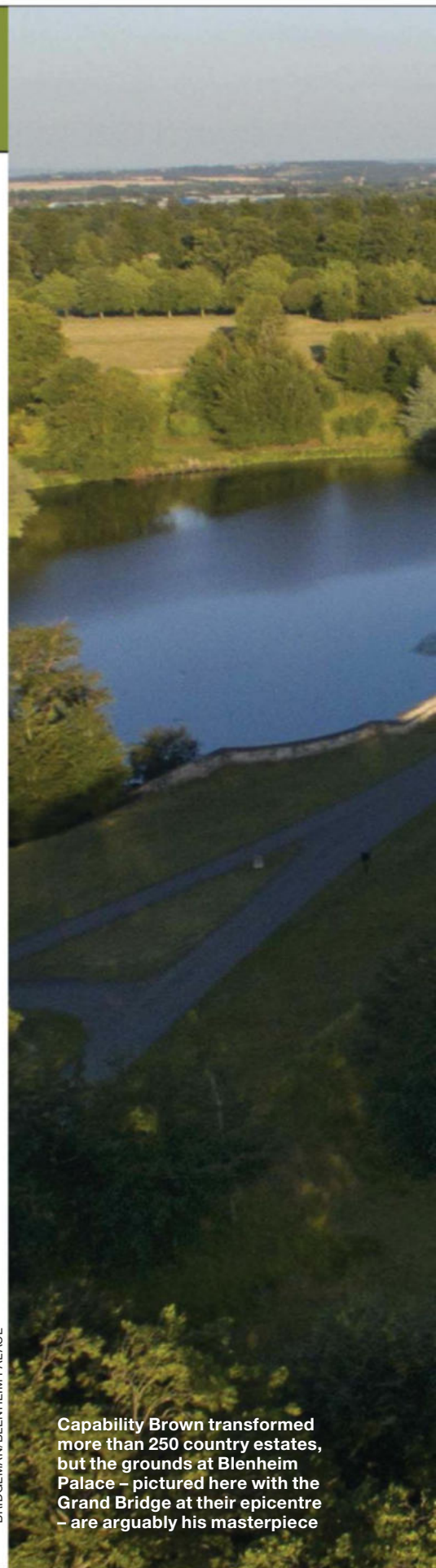
"Brown lived in a time that was a maelstrom of change and opportunity," explains garden historian Sarah Rutherford. As expected, Sarah proves to be an excellent guide not only to the delights of Blenheim's parkland, but also to what drove the man and his artistry. "He didn't have a university education, but he did have a multitude of talents that gradually blossomed and that he made the most of. He not only had a genius for landscape design and the artistic side of things, but he taught himself architecture, he understood engineering, he was an able businessman and he got on with his clients, the wealthiest in the land."

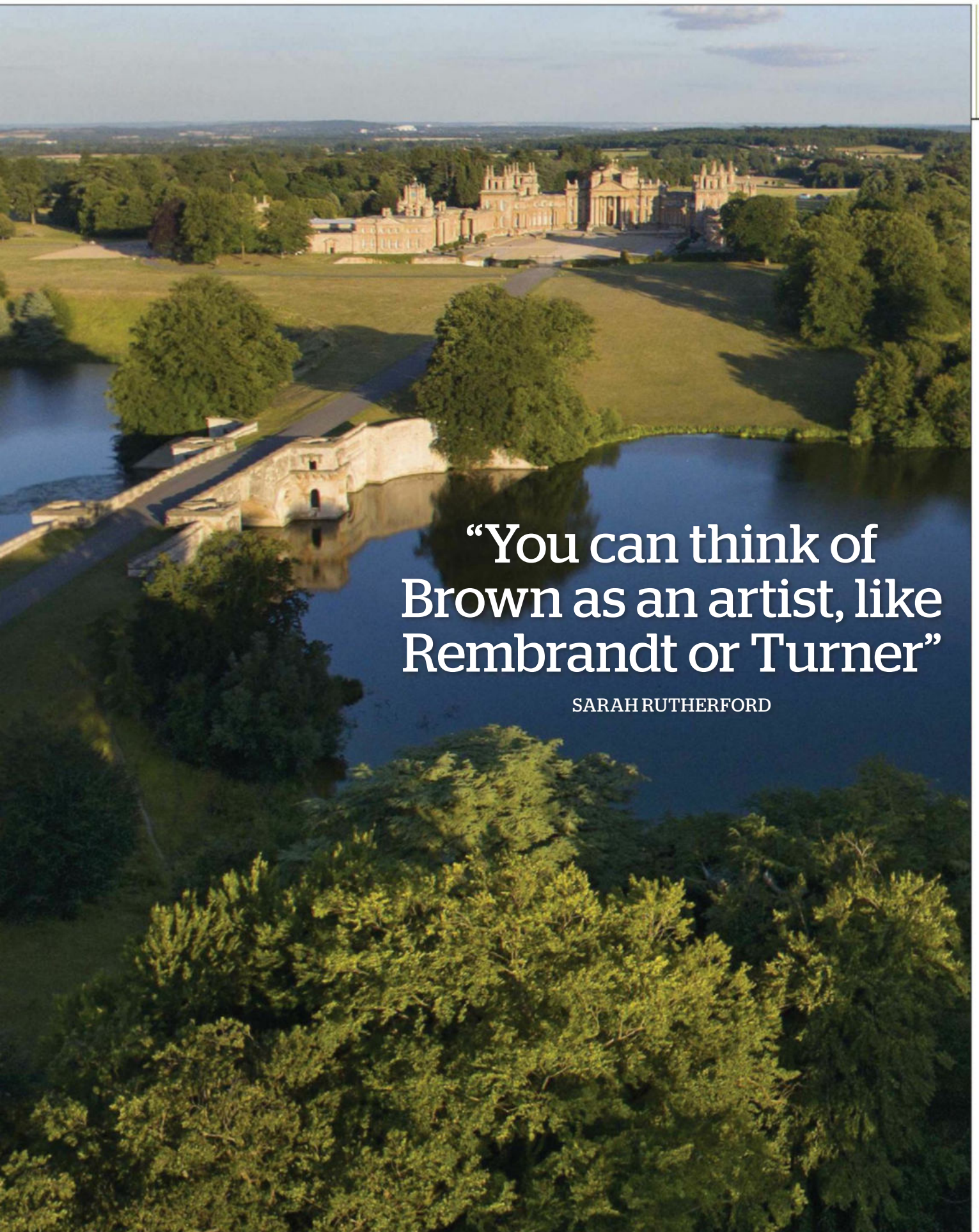
Influential friends

Brown's big break had been his appointment as head gardener at Stowe in Buckinghamshire in 1741, when he was only in his mid-twenties. It was a prestigious job; Stowe at the time was the greatest garden in the country. Not only did Lord Cobham charge Brown with landscaping and building work, but the company his employer kept proved crucial in accelerating his career. "He was loaned out to Cobham's influential friends," explains Sarah. "Then, when Cobham died, Brown went out on his own. He never needed to advertise. Everyone beat a path to his door. They would write him letters: 'Oh please come and see me, Mr Brown. Next time you're passing, I would very much value your opinion. Have a look at my grounds and see what you can do with them.'"

BRIDGEMAN/BLenheim PALACE

Capability Brown transformed more than 250 country estates, but the grounds at Blenheim Palace – pictured here with the Grand Bridge at their epicentre – are arguably his masterpiece





“You can think of
Brown as an artist, like
Rembrandt or Turner”

SARAH RUTHERFORD



A painting of Blenheim's grounds shortly after Brown had transformed them. "He used a very simple palette of water, grass and trees," says Sarah Rutherford

BRIDGEMAN/BLENHEIM PALACE

This reputation was bolstered by Brown's nickname. 'Capability' wasn't a reference to his own attributes; it alluded to the promise of a particular estate. "He was able to size up a site and say: 'This place has capabilities, my lord.' He could see the capabilities and how to make an artistic picture out of them. In today's terms, we'd probably call him 'Potential' Brown."

Works of art

Gazing out across Blenheim's unblemished vista, it feels like you're looking at a landscape painting, one caught in time in oils or watercolour. "Brown *was* an artist," confirms Sarah. "You can think of him as being like Rembrandt or Turner. He used a very simple palette of water, grass and trees – as you see here – and turned it into something that looked almost natural. That was the key to it. His parks settle into the British landscape so beautifully that you can't tell what's natural and what's artificial."

So subtle are many of Brown's touches that it takes a garden historian to make my untrained eye aware of them. As we

approach the northerly tip of Blenheim's lake, evidence of such subtlety is right before us. "He put islands at the end of lakes," Sarah says, indicating a tiny archipelago of three islands below us, "to make you think that the water goes on forever. You can't see where it goes. You can't tell if it goes on for another 100 miles."

Not everything at Blenheim is Brown's work, though. He inherited the 50-year-old Grand Bridge and needed to accommodate it within his design. His solution was to greatly widen the trickling river Glyme by digging out a valley, flooding it and damming it; the lower storeys of the previously outsized bridge were deliberately submerged. All of this, of course, was done by hand in those pre-mechanised times. The effect was worth that titanic effort, the perfect sense of scale giving the illusion that the water has always been there and that the bridge is the newer addition to the landscape.

While Brown's designs weren't a million miles from those of his competitors, he dominated the market thanks to his contacts and connections. And thanks to thinking

bigger. "He was country-wide while the others were rather more regional," says Sarah. "He was criss-crossing the country on his horse the whole time. He was all over the place." Not that Brown was a ruthless businessman intent on crushing his competition. He barely viewed competitors as rivals. Often former employees of his, they would charge notably less. But, fortified by his formidable reputation, he wasn't bothered. "There were enough parks that he



"BROWN'S PARKS SETTLE INTO THE LANDSCAPE SO BEAUTIFULLY THAT YOU CAN'T TELL WHAT'S NATURAL AND WHAT'S ARTIFICIAL"

VISIT

Blenheim Palace



Woodstock, Oxfordshire OX20 1PP

● blenheimpalace.com

as much as the equivalent of £40m when he died – unlike poor old Chippendale the furniture-maker whose household goods at the end of his life were worth £26!”

In 1764, George III appointed Brown royal gardener, tasking him with maintaining Hampton Court and St James’s Palace. This also gave the workaholic landscape designer plenty of time to undertake his own projects (indeed, work had only started on Blenheim the year before). Brown made very few changes to Hampton Court. “He said it was out of respect for the design that was already there,” Sarah notes. “Actually it’s because no one was paying him to.”

Heading back to the palace, we pause – along with several of the many dog-walkers enjoying the lunchtime sunshine – to take in the view from the Grand Bridge. Sarah shows me a reproduced original drawing of Brown’s vision for the park, one sketched out at this exact spot, with the lake, the largest island, and Woodstock on the horizon. The scene now is almost exactly as Brown planned it more than 250 years ago.

“He would recognise Blenheim today without a doubt,” she concludes. “It’s pretty much as he envisaged it. After Brown’s death, people said his work was too bland, too smooth, that things needed to be rougher. Of course, trends move on. But most of his parks still survive. They’re very enduring. People didn’t wipe them out. They still have them and they still love them.” ■



Historical advisor: **Dr Sarah Rutherford**, author of *Capability Brown and His Landscape Gardens* (National Trust Books, 2016).

Words: Nige Tassell

Blenheim Palace is currently hosting a special Capability Brown exhibition (blenheimpalace.com)

CAPABILITY BROWN: FIVE MORE PLACES TO EXPLORE

1 Alnwick Castle

NORTHUMBERLAND

Where Brown deftly employed trees

Commissioned by the 1st Duke of Northumberland, Brown returned to his home county to reconfigure the land to the north of the castle as it rolled down towards the river Aln. He flattened the land and planted plenty of trees. These deliberately obscured a view of the castle until its finest aspect was revealed.

alnwickcastle.com

2 Harewood House LEEDS

Where Brown reshaped 1,000 acres

Brown rarely designed the grounds of a just-built house. But shortly after Harewood House’s final brick was laid in 1771, he embarked on one of his most impressive designs yet, reshaping 1,000 acres of the existing landscape into the gently sweeping sight it remains today.

harewood.org

3 Petworth House and Park

WEST SUSSEX

Where he shifted heaven and earth

The Petworth estate was a relatively early project for Brown, taken on by him in 1751, more than a decade before he started tackling Blenheim. Petworth was also a major project: 70,000 tonnes of soil and clay were moved in order to produce the perfectly undulating landscape. national-trust.org.uk/petworth-house-and-park

4 Weston Park SHROPSHIRE

Where a lake was cunningly created

Weston Park is home to one of the five pleasure grounds Brown designed. It was commissioned by Sir Henry Bridgeman after he inherited the estate in 1764. One of the recently restored areas here – Temple Wood – showcases Brown’s trademark talent with water, having dammed a stream to form a lake. weston-park.com

5 Wimpole Estate

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Where parkland dominates

Brown transformed the area of this estate known as North Park, dispensing with formality and creating open parkland. He also turned the sharp angles of two fishponds into serpentine lakes while digging a third. The combination gave the illusion of a river flowing through this part of the grounds.

nationaltrust.org.uk/wimpole-estate

didn’t touch that the others could Hoover up. The crumbs off his table, if you like.”

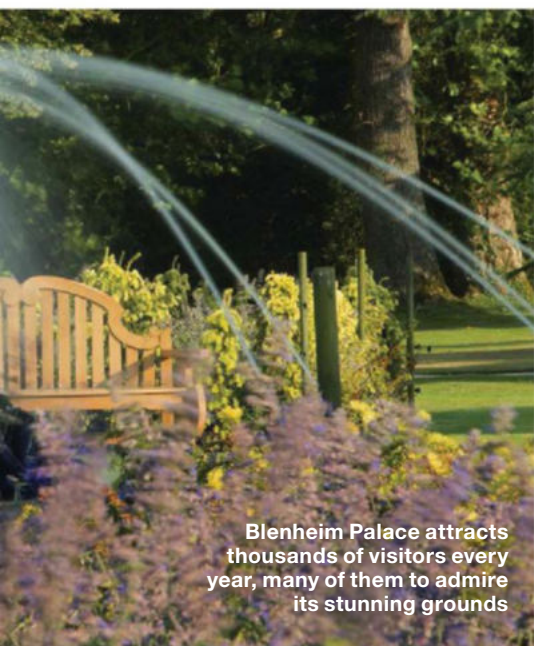
Brown’s concurrent contracts meant he not only had a great many people working for him, but that he was getting noticeably richer. In the 1760s, his busiest decade, he was turning over tens of thousands of pounds – millions and millions in today’s money. And the spirit of oneupmanship displayed by landowners kept the contracts coming, as Sarah reveals. “Some would say: ‘Do as you want. Just give me a landscape that my peers will be impressed with. I’ve got the money, you’ve got the taste. Get on with it.’ Others would be more specific and not allow him free rein.”

Wild woodlands

Brown’s work wasn’t just about aesthetics, though. They needed to serve a range of functions, often those underwritten by economics. The provision of extensive grasslands provided hay as well as grazing for cattle, horses and sheep, while woodlands offered timber production and the breeding of pheasants for shooting.

The great artist always had a head for economics. “Brown was probably a businessman foremost. He had to make a living. He didn’t come from a background where he had an automatic income. He was very astute and didn’t want to live in a garret for his art. He wasn’t one to show off the trappings of wealth. He just wanted to be secure. I’ve calculated that he might have left

BLENHHEIM PALACE



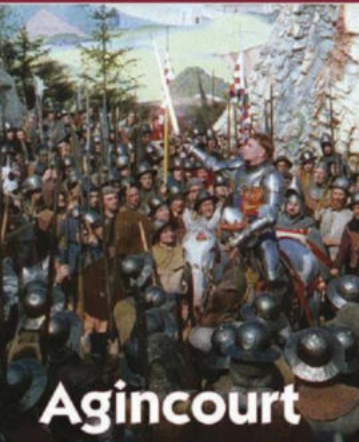
Blenheim Palace attracts thousands of visitors every year, many of them to admire its stunning grounds



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FIVE THINGS TO DO IN MARCH

The Italian master

EXHIBITION

Botticelli Reimagined

V&A, London; 5 March–3 July

☎ 020 7942 2000

● vam.ac.uk



Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510) has inspired generations of painters, sculptors, graphic artists, film makers, fashion and textile designers and photographers. Now, in recognition of the Italian Renaissance artist's glittering legacy, the V&A is hosting the largest Botticelli exhibition staged in Britain since 1930 – one that focuses particularly on those artists his paintings have influenced over the past 150 years.

The 19th century proved something of a golden age for Botticelli, for it was then that his work began to win global recognition after 300 years languishing in the shadows of the likes of da Vinci and Michelangelo. So while 50 of Botticelli's original artworks will inevitably take pride of place in the V&A exhibition, they will be joined by a kaleidoscopic array of artworks produced since the Victorian period. Among them are Andy Warhol's vivid tribute to Botticelli, *Details of Renaissance Paintings*, and a film clip of Ursula Andress emerging from the sea in the James Bond film *Dr No*, both of which were inspired by one of the Italian painter's most famous works, *The Birth of Venus*.

The exhibition also finds room for fashion in the form of a Botticelli-themed Dolce & Gabbana dress that Lady Gaga wore during her Artpop tour, and music by Bob Dylan, whose song 'When I Paint My Masterpiece' refers to "Botticelli's niece".



Venus, as depicted by Sandro Botticelli. The Italian Renaissance artist's rich legacy has inspired a new exhibition at the V&A

NEW ATTRACTION

Handel & Hendrix

Mayfair, London
Open now

☎ 020 7495 1685

● handelhendrix.org



Handel lived and composed at 25 Brook Street for 36 years and the Georgian house has been preserved for education and live performances. Less well known is that 200 years later, Jimi Hendrix lived next door and his flat has just been renovated and opened to the public as part of a joint attraction.



Jimi Hendrix pictured at 23 Brook Street in 1969

EXHIBITION

American Air Museum

Imperial War Museum, Duxford, Cambridgeshire

Re-opens 19 March

☎ 012 2383 5000

● americanairmuseum.com

Be among the first to visit the newly redeveloped exhibition, and explore historic aircraft, uniforms, recorded memories and personal objects telling the fascinating story of Anglo-American co-operation through two world wars and beyond.

EXHIBITION

Comic Invention

Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow

18 March–17 July

☎ 0141 330 4221

● gla.ac.uk/hunterian

Comic Invention is a celebration of our love of graphic narrative from ancient Greece to 20th-century greats such as David Hockney. It also showcases the first display of original drawings by Scottish artist Frank Quitely (of DC Comics fame). A notable exhibit, given the location, is *The Glasgow Looking Glass*, arguably the world's oldest comic, published in 1825.

EXHIBITION

In the Age of Giorgione

Royal Academy, London

12 March–5 June

☎ 020 7300 8090

● royalacademy.org.uk

The contribution of the Italian artist Giorgione (died 1510) to the Venetian Renaissance cannot be underestimated and this exhibition shines a light on his achievements and his influence on his contemporaries. There are more than 50 works on show, including a number by the painter himself as well as others by 16th-century artists including Titian, Bellini and del Piombo.

MY FAVOURITE PLACE

Penang, Malaysia



by Susan Law

For the latest in our historical holidays series, Susan Law shares her love of Penang, where east and west collide gloriously

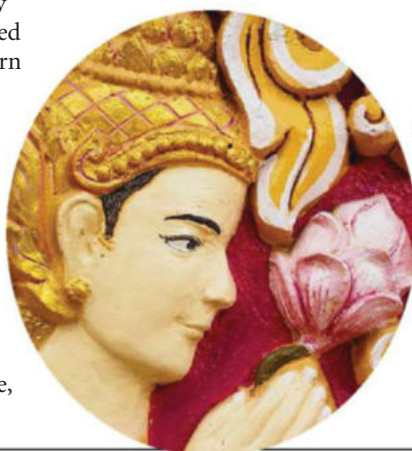
My first glimpse of Penang was from the ferry at dusk – a shadowy presence across a shimmering expanse of inky sea. As we got closer, the first buildings began to take shape. Ramshackle wooden houses sprawled along the waterfront, while an imposing white stone facade stretched away to the right. Behind them was a lone concrete skyscraper, and the hills in the distance were studded with lights.

Later my taxi sped through the streets of George Town, along busy streets of Chinese shops with flashing neon signs, passing ornate temples and mysterious crumbling mansions fronted by vast green lawns. When I reached the faded grandeur of the Eastern & Oriental (E&O) Hotel on Lebuhr Farquhar, with its fraying rattan chairs and creaky ceiling fans, I felt as if I was stepping back in time to its colonial heyday.

That was several decades ago, but it is Penang's intriguing blend of past and present, east and west, that has lured me back many times since, to this truly beautiful tropical

island off the coast of Malaysia known as the Pearl of the Orient. Many tourists, superglued to their sun-loungers in luxury resorts along the palm-fringed beaches of Batu Ferringhi, never see the real Penang. But for curious travellers there is a fascinating history to unearth in this vivid kaleidoscope of Malay, European, Chinese and Indian cultures.

Discovered by Portuguese spice traders seeking fresh water in the 16th century, Penang quickly grew into a thriving port after the arrival of English captain Francis Light in 1786, who claimed it for the crown. He established Fort Cornwallis and, folklore has it, persuaded men to



Kek Lok Si Buddhist Temple is decorated with thousands of Chinese lanterns on festival days and brightly lit for 30 nights following Chinese New Year

clear land for settlement by firing silver coins from his ship's cannons into dense jungle.

His elegant riverside mansion, Suffolk House (now open to visitors), was home to successive governors from 1810, and hosted discussions on the founding of nearby Singapore. The island grew rich as a trading post for commodities like rubber, nutmeg and coconuts, later surviving Japanese occupation in the Second World War. It has been part of Malaysia since 1963.

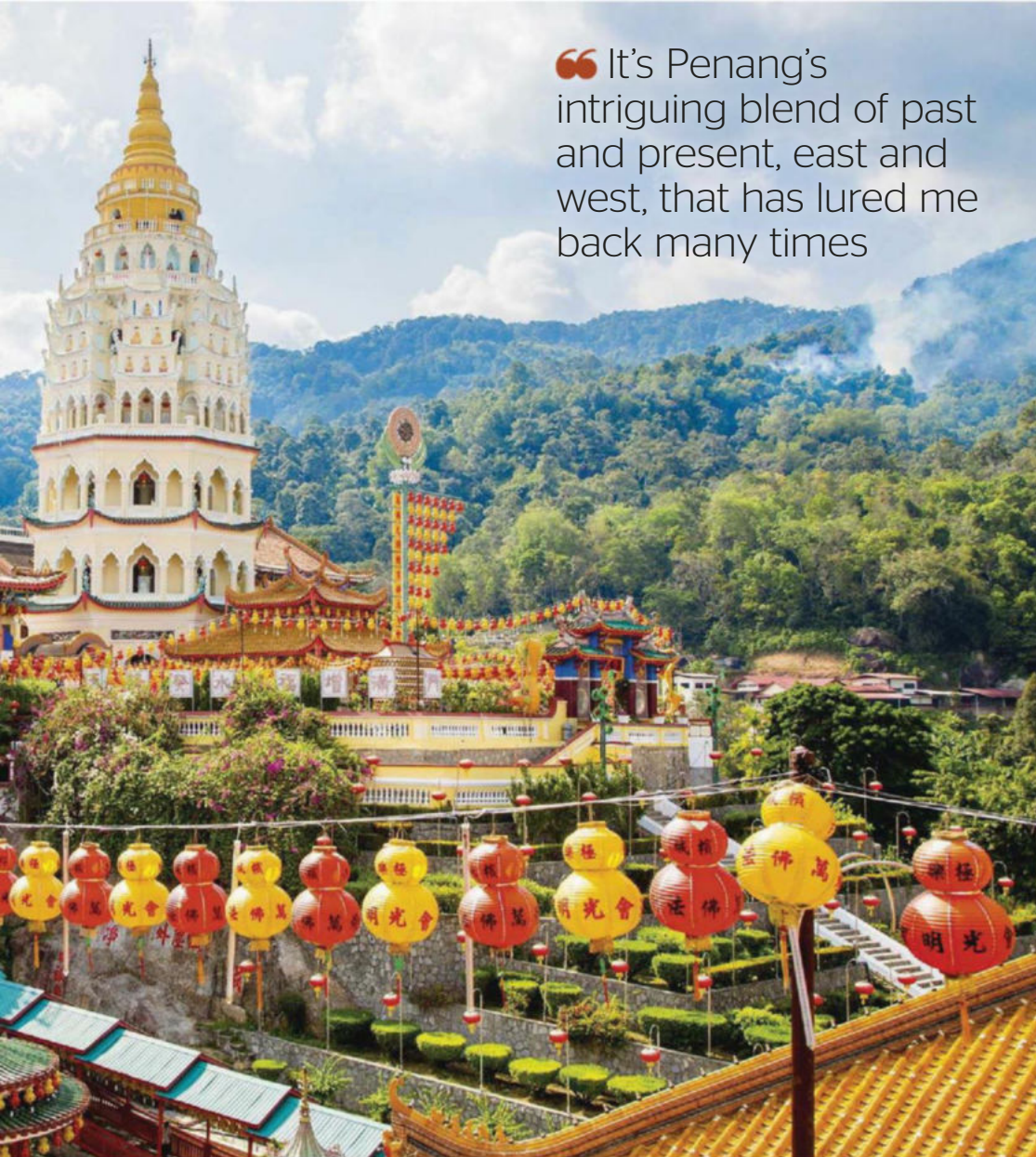
My parents lived on Penang for several years, so I visited often, seeking out new places and revisiting old haunts. Since my first encounter, the E&O

A wall relief depicting Buddha at the Dhammikarama Temple, George Town's Burmese temple

has been spruced up, as have many of the island's historic buildings, in a major restoration programme, bringing their decaying skeletons back to life after a century of neglect. In 1999 George Town was listed as one of the world's 100 most endangered places and in 2008 became a Unesco World Heritage Site.

George Town is a compact little city you can easily explore on foot, though a trishaw ride is the most relaxing way to get around in the heat, as you sit back and take in the sights while being pedalled along at a leisurely pace. Everywhere street names tell the story of past settlers – from Downing Street by the harbour or Jalan Burma (Burmah Road), to Armenian Street where the 1867 Penang Riots erupted when the Red and White Flag secret

CORBIS



“It’s Penang’s intriguing blend of past and present, east and west, that has lured me back many times

societies fought for control.

In Cannon Square, the striking Khoo Kongsi with its ornate curved red roof, is a grand Chinese clan-house complex dating back to 1898 that’s usually packed with visitors. In nearby old Pitt Street, you’ll find four major religions co-existing as neighbours, including Kapitan Keling Mosque that was founded in 1801 for Indian traders and the sandalwood-scented Goddess of Mercy Temple guarded by stone dragons.

Further afield, I always love a trip on the little funicular railway

up the cooler wooded slopes of Penang Hill, with its scattered colonial buildings and spectacular views to the mainland. Kek Lok Si Buddhist temple has a timeless charm, laid out over 10 acres of hillside and decorated with thousands of coloured lanterns on festival days. Also worth visiting are the Snake Temple (resident pit vipers doze on the altar) and the traditional Malay village Kampong Seronok.

The food is as richly diverse as the people and the island is renowned for its street hawker stalls. Try the traditional fried rice dish *nasi goreng* (my favourite) or searing hot *beef rendang* if you dare. And, for a really unexpected taste, there’s durian fruit, that can be a shock to novices who either love or

loathe its pungent creamy flesh.

Penang is full of surprises, with the familiar and the exotic jostling for attention round every corner. Each time I return, I’m struck again by its amazing contrasts – and relieved to see another fragment of its colourful past has been rescued for the future. ■

Dr Susan Law is a journalist and historian whose latest book is *Through the Keyhole: Sex, Scandal and the Secret Life of the Country House* (History Press, 2015)

Read more about Susan’s experiences in Penang at historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/penang

Next month: James Holland pays a visit to Malta

ADVICE FOR TRAVELLERS

BEST TIME TO GO

February is one of the best times to visit as it’s the driest month and you can also join in the Chinese New Year celebrations. There are many festivals all year round – look out for international dragon boat racing in May.

GETTING THERE

Choose between a short ferry trip from Butterworth on the mainland, driving over the toll bridge or flying in to Penang International Airport (10 miles south of George Town), which serves most major airlines.

WHAT TO TAKE

Temperatures average 30 degrees (dropping slightly in November–December) and it can feel very humid, so plenty of light cotton clothing and a sun hat are essential. And don’t forget your camera.

WHAT TO BRING BACK

You can buy lots of traditional handicrafts like the intricately dyed batik cloth (how about a colourful sarong?) or beaded shoes. Try the many goldsmiths’ shops for distinctive 22-carat gold jewellery.

READERS’ VIEWS

Hear colonial echoes around Georgetown, see elite life at Pinang Peranakan Mansion and taste a cocktail at the Eastern & Oriental @howardbatey



Been there...

Have you been to **Penang**? Do you have a top tip for readers? Contact us via Twitter or Facebook

twitter.com/historyextra

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EASTER ADVENTURES

With Easter and some well-deserved time off fast approaching, why not use this selection of activities and places to stay to inspire your history adventures?

HEVER CASTLE AND GARDENS



Experience 700 years of history at Hever Castle, the childhood home of Anne Boleyn. Young visitors can let off steam in the adventure playground, enjoy the challenge of finding their way through the 100 year old Yew Maze or discover the magic of Easter and join the hunt to find the Lindt Gold Bunny.

Hever, Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 7NG

01732 865224
www.hevercastle.co.uk

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Syon House, Syon Park, Brentford, Middlesex, TW8 8JF

020 8560 0882
www.syonpark.co.uk

BURGHLEY HOUSE



At Burghley House, on the edge of the stone town of Stamford in Lincolnshire, is a children's guidebook called *Beastly Boring Burghley*, offering a colourful and comical look at the history of one of Britain's most spectacular Tudor country estates. Now *Beastly Boring Burghley* is being brought to life with costumed guided tours during the Easter holidays when you will be taken on an exciting journey through this remarkable House.

Burghley House, Stamford PE9 3JY

01780 752451
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Apedale Valley Light Railway, Loomer Rd, Chesterton, Newcastle-under-Lyme ST5 7LB

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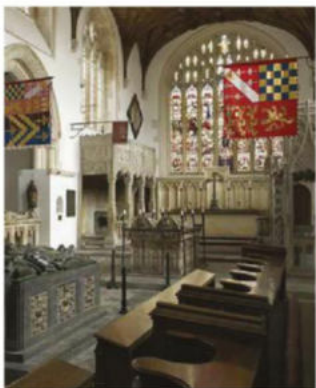
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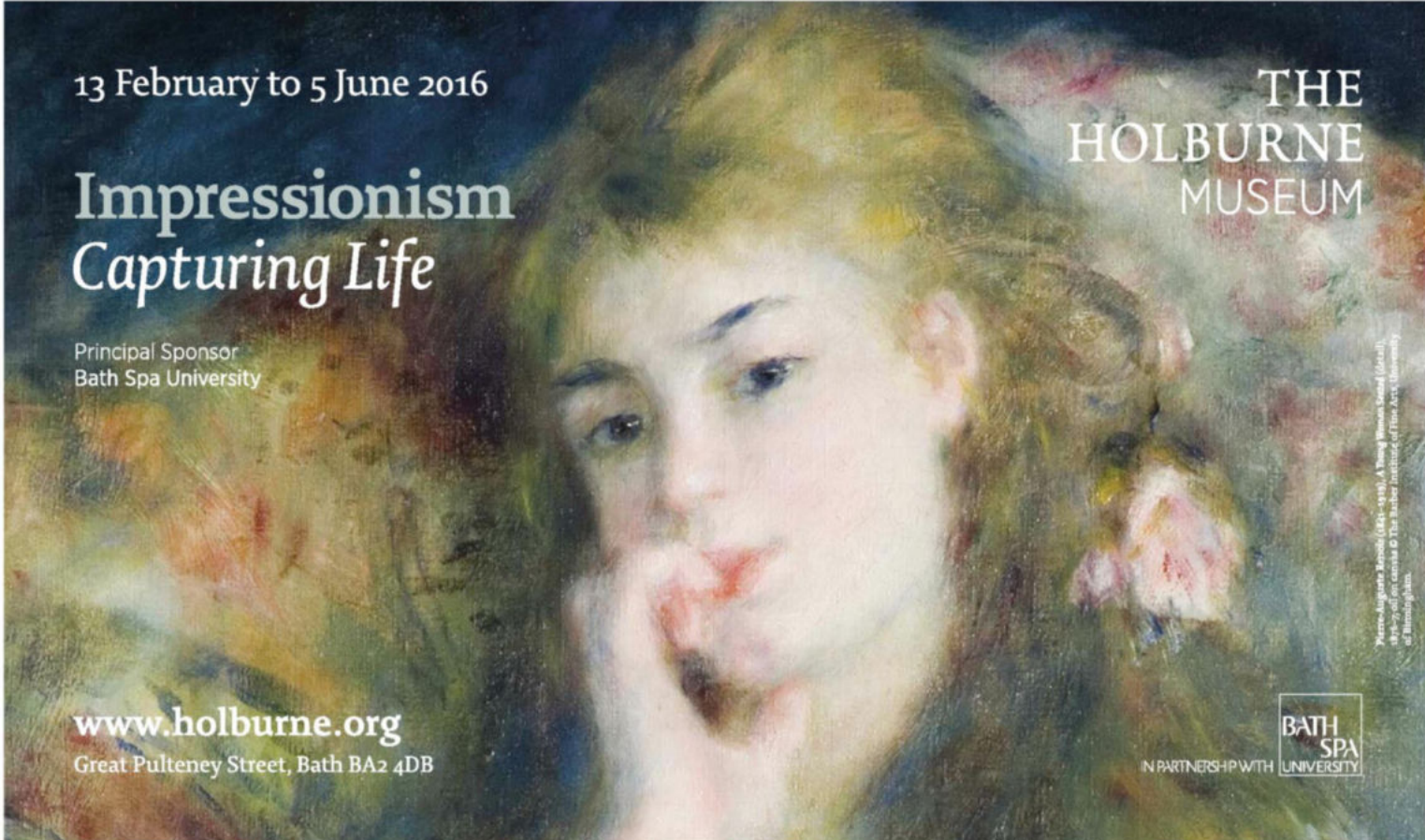


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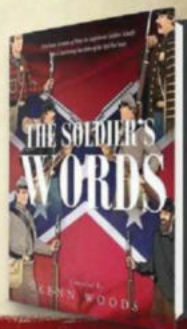
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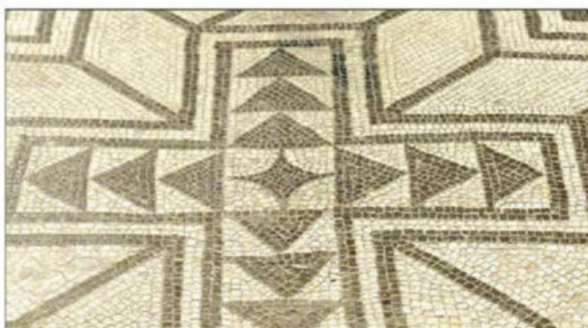
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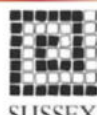
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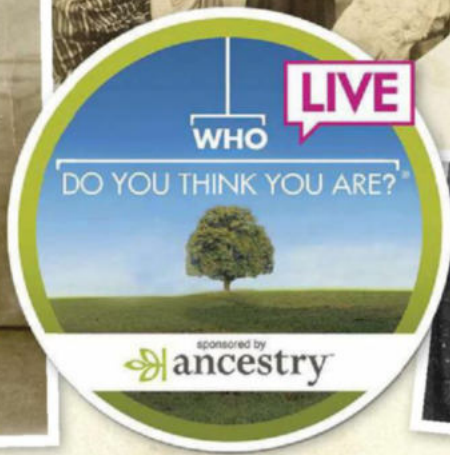
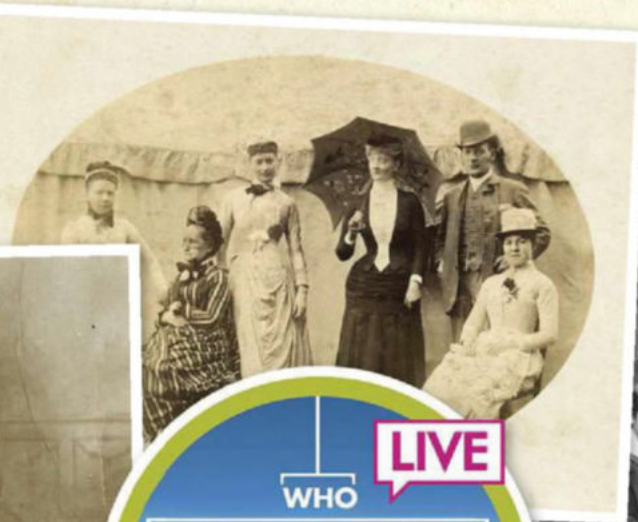
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Q&A



QUIZ

BY JULIAN HUMPHRYS

Try your hand at this month's history quiz

ONLINE QUIZZES

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1. Which iconic symbol of American independence was made in Whitechapel, London?

2. Which town in Greater London once boasted one of the largest fishing fleets in the world?

3. Which handy piece of picnic equipment was invented in the 1890s by Scottish scientist James Dewar?

4. Who did former Shropshire policeman Anthony Hall challenge to judicial combat in 1931?

5. Which Glasgow-born singer-songwriter has written songs about Charlotte Corday, Admiral Sir John Fisher, US president Warren G Harding, and Operation Barbarossa?

6. This dress, now in Smallhythe Place in Kent, was worn by legendary actress Ellen Terry when she played Lady Macbeth at the Lyceum in 1888. What is it covered with?



QUIZ ANSWERS

1. The Liberty Bell, which was cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in 1752 **2.** Barking – in the mid-19th century it sent out over 200 ships **3.** The vacuum flask **4.** King George V (Hall claimed to be England's rightful king) **5.** Al Stewart (best known for the soft-rock classic 'Year of the Cat') **6.** Beetle wings

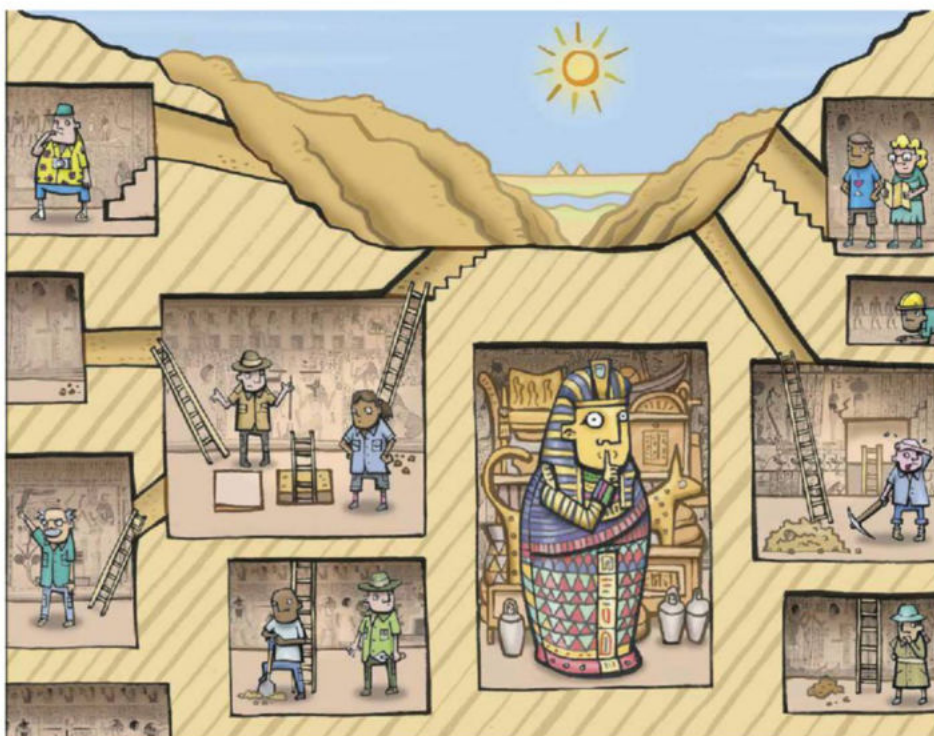


ILLUSTRATION BY GLEN MCBETH

Q Are there any pharaohs' tombs still to be discovered in the Valley of the Kings?

Ekbalco, via Twitter

A If you mean kings' tombs, then the tomb of the 12th-century BC pharaoh Ramses VIII has not yet been discovered. And although the valley is best known as the cemetery of Egypt's kings between c1500–1100 BC, other members of the royal family and favoured courtiers could also be buried there, together with those who reused some of the tombs in later times.

Perhaps surprisingly, the valley has never been completely excavated, with the clearance of tomb KV40 as recently as 2014 revealing the mummified remains of relatives of the 18th Dynasty pharaoh Amenhotep III (c1390–1352 BC). Two years earlier, the same archaeologists discovered the adjacent tomb KV64, which contained the remains of an 18th Dynasty princess alongside the intact mummy of a

priestess who had been buried there around 500 years later. Prior to that, tomb KV63 was found in 2006, containing empty coffins from the Amarna Period, 14th-century BC, when some royal occupants of the valley underwent a 'reshuffle' and their bodies and coffins were swapped around and reinterred.

Even in the case of the valley's most famous tomb, KV62 – burial place of Tutankhamun, scans made in 2014 revealed that further chambers may remain hidden beyond its plastered walls (a practice found in other royal tombs). And that is why the Valley of the Kings is such a fascinating place – so famous and yet still making world headlines with these new discoveries.

Joann Fletcher, presenter of the recent BBC Two series *Immortal Egypt*

SAMANTHA'S RECIPE CORNER



Every issue, picture editor **Samantha Nott** brings you a recipe from the past. This month it is a fish recipe written by a famous Victorian cookery writer

Mrs Beeton's curried cod

Isabella Beeton (1836–65) was only in her mid-20s when she wrote her *Book of Household Management*, initially published in several parts from 1859–61. Comprising thousands of recipes, with other tips for ladies of the house and their servants, the book became a publishing sensation.

I've selected her recipe for curried cod, a fish that Beeton said would be in season at this time of year. I found the end result rather heavy on butter, so you may wish to adjust the quantities from her original ingredients, which are reproduced below.

Alongside the recipes, Beeton provided fascinating commentaries on some of the ingredients. The cod, she wrote, "is found only in the seas of the northern parts of the world... These places are its favourite resorts; for there it is able to obtain great quantities of worms, a food peculiarly grateful to it."

INGREDIENTS

- 2 slices of large cod [the

larger the better]

- 3oz of butter
- 1 onion sliced
- A teacupful of white stock [I filled a cup with half a stock cube and hot water]
- Thickening of butter and flour [essentially a roux]
- 1 small teaspoonful of curry powder
- ¼ pint of cream
- Salt and cayenne to taste

METHOD

Flake the fish and fry it with the butter and onions for around 10 minutes in a large frying pan or sauté pan. Add the stock and roux and simmer for 10 minutes. Stir the curry-powder into the cream and add it with the seasoning to the other ingredients. Bring it to the boil and serve, with rice, potatoes or bread.

Difficulty: 2/10

Time: 45 minutes

Recipe taken from The Book of Household Management



A drawing of a cod from the mid-Victorian era, when Mrs Beeton was writing

GOT A QUESTION?

Write to *BBC History Magazine*, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN. Email: historymagazine@historyextra.com or submit via our website: historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine



A carved portrait of the Black Prince in St Margaret's Church, King's Lynn, about 300 miles from Cornwall

Q Why was Edward of Woodstock, the Black Prince, appointed the first Duke of Cornwall? I understand he was born in Woodstock, so why Cornwall?

David Armstrong, Cheshire

A The Black Prince, eldest son of Edward III, was born in 1330 and became Earl of Chester (1333), Duke of Cornwall (1337), and Prince of Wales (1343). The title of Earl of Cornwall had been created in the 12th century and was associated with the royal family. It had fallen vacant on the death of Edward III's younger brother, John of Eltham, in 1336.

The creation of the title in 1337 was new in two respects. First, the earldom became a dukedom – this was the first time that the title of duke was used in England. Secondly, the new dukedom was entailed, meaning that it could only ever be held by the heir to the throne or, in their absence, by the monarch.

Then, as now, the titles bestowed on the princes did not

relate to their places of birth. The Black Prince's brothers John and Edmund, for example – who were born at Ghent in Flanders and at Kings Langley in Hertfordshire – later became dukes of Lancaster and York.

The estates of the Duchy of Cornwall were scattered over a wide range of English counties. But the duke held a very important cluster of manors, towns and jurisdictions within Cornwall, along with privileges such as the right to appoint the county sheriff.

Cornwall was a rich source of income and the Black Prince visited the county several times during his nearly 40 years as duke, sometimes staying at Restormel Castle.

Mark Ormrod, professor of History at the University of York

PRIZE CROSSWORD

What did Roosevelt
keep hidden?
(see 11 across)



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Across

- 1** Stephen, archbishop of Canterbury, centre of a dispute between King John and the pope, leading to Magna Carta (7)
5 Kingdom – major German power in Europe after Napoleonic Wars, abolished by the Allies in 1947 (7)
9 Controversial means of destruction used by US in Vietnam War (6)
10 Relating to one of the first great civilisations, in the area that later became Babylonia (8)
11 President FD Roosevelt did a good job of concealing his reliance on this from the general public (10)
12 After independence from Britain in 1967 this Red Sea port became the capital of a new republic (4)
13 Begun in AD 122, this barrier was effectively the northern limit of the Roman empire (8,4)
17 British cavalry officer and Antarctic explorer, renowned for a selfless, tragic act (7,5)
20 Richard Henry ____, the 20th-century social critic and economic historian (6)
22 A means of collecting revenue from American colonies, this British legislation of 1765 was short-lived (5,3)
24 Wernher, a former Nazi party member who became the leading US aerospace engineer (3,5)
25 The name for a central African state, used between 1971 and 1997 when its president was forced to relinquish power to a rebel leader (5)
26 The 19th-century Scottish historian and essayist, Thomas (7)
27 Area of Liverpool, location of serious riots in July 1981 (7)

Down

- 2** Native American people of south-western USA and northern Mexico, of whom a celebrated leader was Cochise (6)
3 Former artillery ammunition consisting of small, tightly packed balls (9)
4 The first major pre-Columbian civilisation of Mesoamerica, dating

from at least 1200 BC to about 400 BC (5)

- 6** Considered to be one of the greatest painters and etchers of European art, he was forced into bankruptcy in 1656 (9)
7 Country that, with Egypt, formed the short-lived United Arab Republic (1958–61) (5)
8 Ruling jointly with her husband, she initiated the Inquisition and financed Columbus's voyage of 1492 (8)
10 Secret police agency disbanded after the fall of the Berlin Wall (5)
14 Populist newspaper started in 1896 by Lord Northcliffe, which soon had a circulation of over a million (5,4)
15 Military academy which has trained commanders such as Grant, Sherman, Eisenhower and Patton (4,5)
16 Location of battles in 1777 that turned the War of Independence in favour of the Americans (8)
18 For many hundreds of years from the 12th century, the dominant family of the Roman aristocracy (6)
19 J Presper ____, co-inventor of the first general purpose electronic computer, ENIAC, made public in 1946 (6)

- 21** Swedish inventor of dynamite, better known for the humanitarian use to which the bulk of his fortune was put after his death (5)
23 Italian site of heavy fighting in the Second World War, called Antium in Roman times (5)

Compiled by **Eddie James**

SOLUTION TO OUR JANUARY CROSSWORD

Across: 1 Torquemada 6 USSR 10 Oscar 11 El Alamein 12 Salerno 14 Selby 15 Jingoism 16/23 Orange Order 19 Assisi 21 J M Barrie 25 Benthams 27 Armistice 29 Opera 30 Cuba 31 Challenger. **Down:** 1 Troy 2 Recusants 3 Utrillo 4 Mae 5 Draco 7 Steel 8 Runnymede 9 Caesar 13 Rusk 15 Joan of Arc 17 Nuremberg 18 Amin 20 Stresa 22 Athlone 24 Demob 25 Bligh 26 Parr 28 Eil.

TEN WINNERS OF ROMAN BRITAIN FROM THE AIR

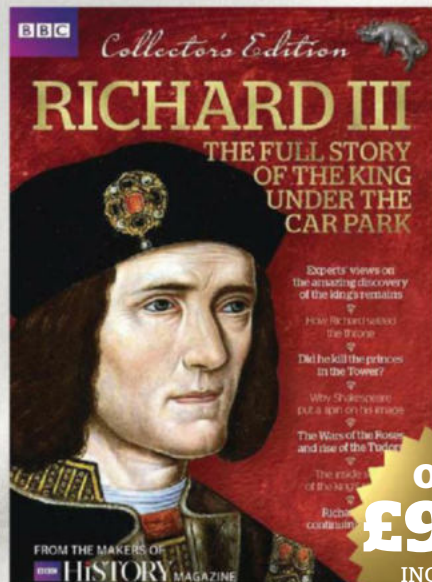
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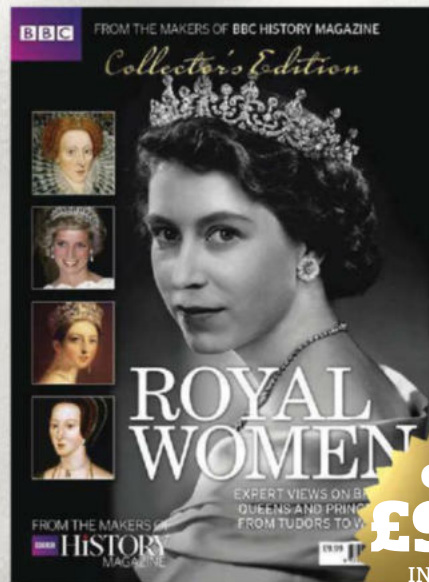


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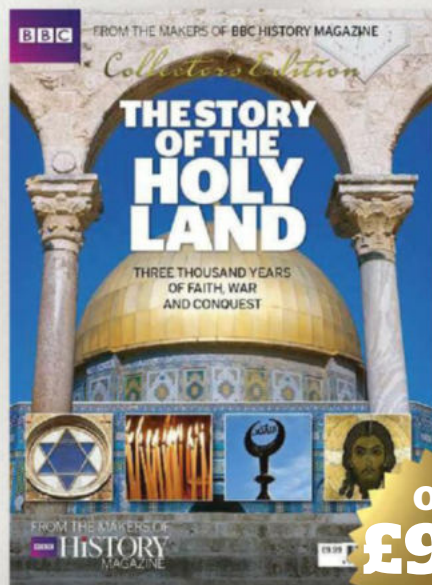


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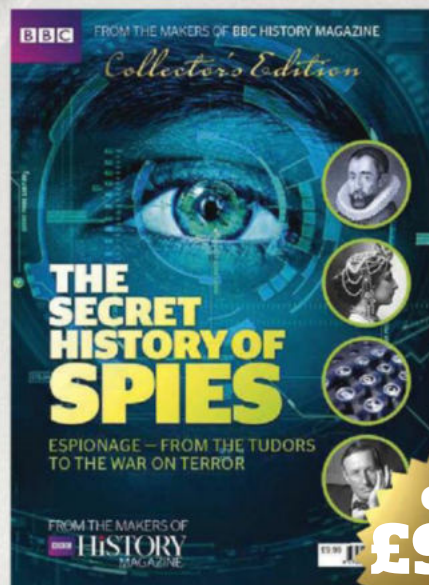


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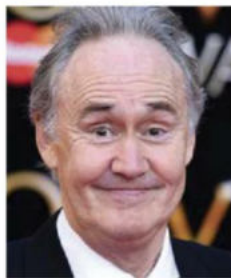
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Sarah Foot on the brief reign of one of England's last Anglo-Saxon kings



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"He was born a Dalit – an 'untouchable' – yet went on to write post-independence India's constitution, so the trajectory of his achievement is astonishing"

Actor Nigel Planer chooses

Bhimrao Ambedkar

1891-1956

Bhimrao Ambedkar was an Indian lawyer, economist, politician and social reformer – and the principal architect of India's constitution after it gained independence in 1947. Born into an 'untouchable' caste, he was a brilliant student and went on to gain degrees at Columbia University, New York and the London School of Economics before pursuing a career in law and politics. A lifelong opponent of the caste system, he also helped inspire modern Buddhism. In 1990, he was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award.

When did you first hear about Bhimrao Ambedkar?

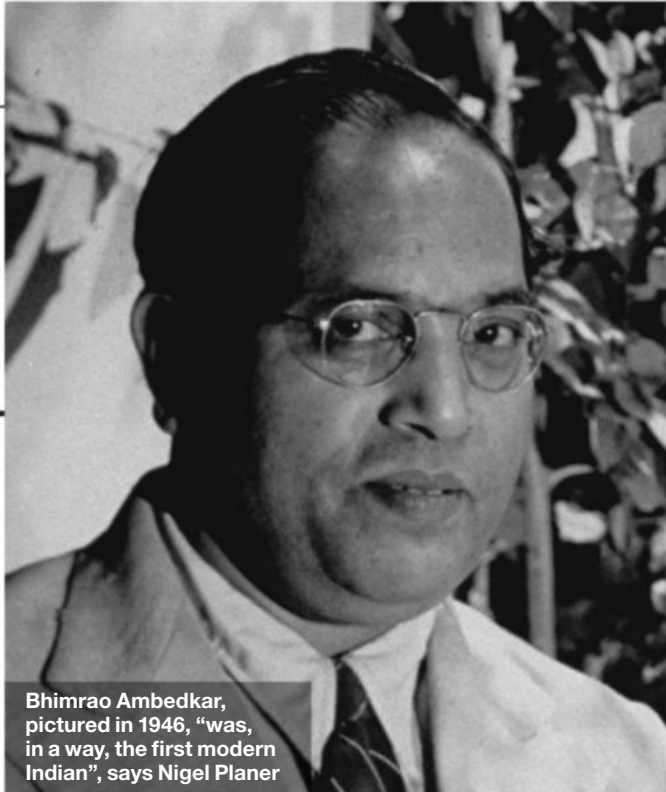
I first heard about 'Babasaheb' – as he was affectionately known – Ambedkar when I chanced upon a statue of this pudgy-looking bald chap in glasses on a trip to Rajasthan in the 1970s. He certainly didn't look very heroic! But when I started reading up about him, I soon realised that he was a truly extraordinary figure.

What kind of person was Dr Ambedkar?

There are few people who you can say were great in terms of both their achievements and willpower – but with him you can. He was born a Dalit – an 'untouchable' – so he wasn't allowed to sit in the school classroom, or even touch the class water jug. Yet he went from that to being post-independence India's first law minister, and then wrote its constitution – so the trajectory of his achievement is astonishing. He was someone with a great feel for what was right and just. In a way, he was the first modern Indian.

What made him a hero?

In part, the fact that he achieved such great things from such disadvantaged beginnings. Even after qualifying as a professor, students and other academics wouldn't talk to him – yet his attitude was not one of bitterness, but one of striving to make things better for society as a whole. So for instance, he started a magazine for untouchables, fought for reserved places for Dalits in the Indian parliament and campaigned for women to have equality of marriage, education and inheritance. However, he remained frugal in his private life. All of which, in my mind, are heroic qualities.



Bhimrao Ambedkar, pictured in 1946, "was, in a way, the first modern Indian", says Nigel Planer

What was Ambedkar's finest hour?

He was the main architect of India's constitution, which has to be his greatest achievement. Looking back, we assume post-independence India was going to be a democracy, but it was far from inevitable. It could have easily gone communist. Weaving together all those states that made up the Raj, and keeping all India's ethnic groups onside, was a huge challenge – yet he wrote a constitution that was acceptable to all, and is still pretty much serviceable today.

So why isn't he better known?

Interestingly, the Indian government has bought the house in Greenwich where he lived when he was studying at the LSE in the 1920s. And last year, prime minister Narendra Modi officially opened Ambedkar House on the site, which is to be developed into an international memorial. So I think that's going to change...

Is there anything you don't particularly admire about him?

I shouldn't imagine he was a barrel of laughs! He was a pretty serious guy, but he would have had to be, to do all that he did.

Can you see any parallels between his life and your own?

I feel completely inadequate on every front compared to him. He was a brilliant scholar, showed great strength of character and had such patience with the world – whereas my maths is appalling, I'm narcissistic and I've never been very good at studying.

If he came to your dinner party, what would you ask him?

I would ask what he really thought of Gandhi, with whom he had his disagreements. I'd like to know if they got on okay personally – or if they really didn't much like each other. **II**

Nigel Planer was talking to York Membery

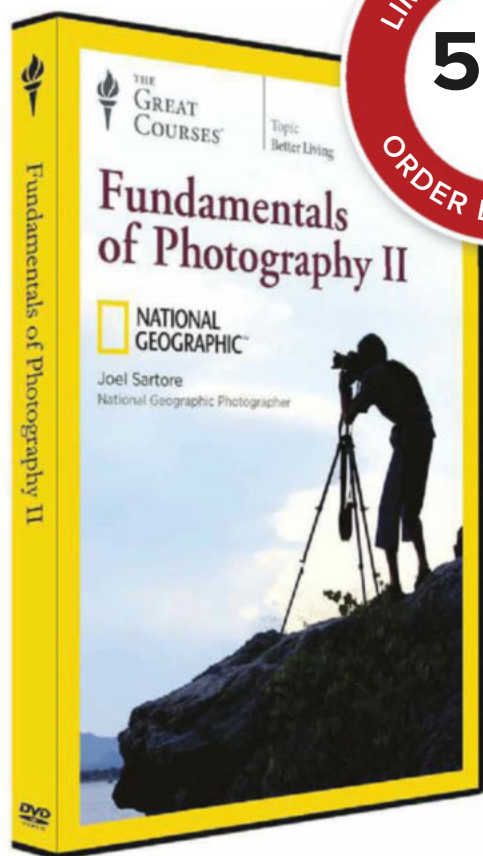
Nigel Planer is an actor best known for his role as Neil in the *The Young Ones*. He is currently appearing in the BBC One series *Boomers*

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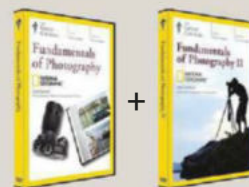
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